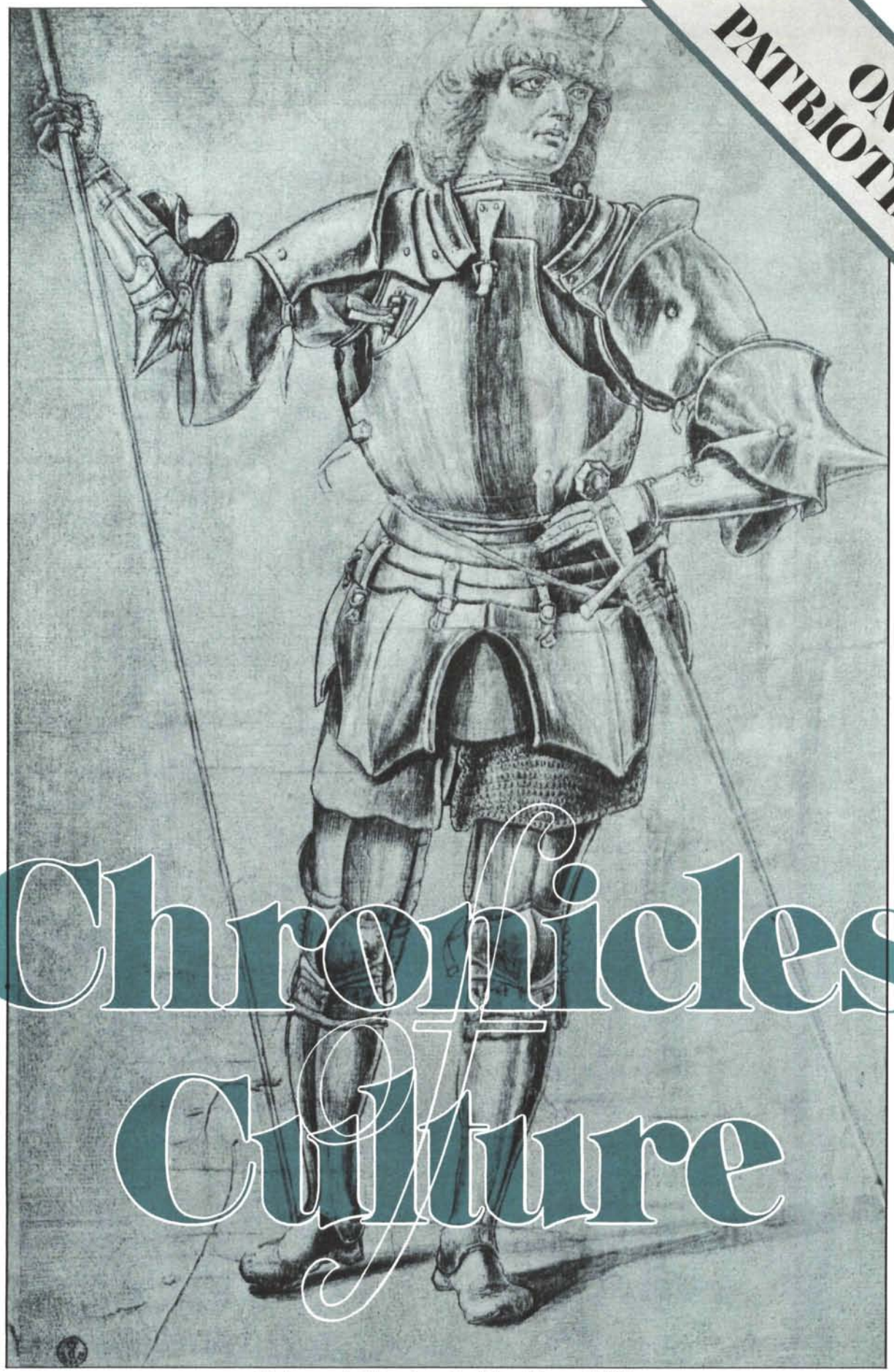
ON PATRIOTISM



Chronicles of Culture

Volume 4, Number 3 May/June 1980

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Chronicles of Culture

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On Patriotism

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Editor's Comment

1.

A couple of distinguished gentlemen recently indulged in an exchange on patriotism. Their polemics were conducted in the letters-to-the-editor section of the *New York Times*—an organ of distinction. Ambrose Bierce was invoked, as was Dr. Johnson and his old dictum about scoundrels and patriotic sentiments. Reading all that, it occurred to me that emotions which spring from one's rapport with one's country mean something different in America from anywhere else.

I remember someone telling me once: "Indisputably, long johns are mankind's most thoughtfully devised garment. They're salutary—by keeping certain regions warm, they warm up the rest of you and preserve what's best in you." I was quite impressed by that reflection. I never saw the face or knew the name of that enthusiast of reliable underwear. He declared his beliefs in a wartime blackout in a forlorn railway station during an air raid; we both were bound for duty, that is, for unknown destinations. But his empiric wisdom somehow articulated my sense of patriotism—a feeling of warmth that should be kept eternally alive. He certainly succeeded in linking my own patriotic awareness—an instinctual, elusive and complex concern for protecting something precious—to the notion of clement temperatures.

However, it must be said that on closer examination I have always been plagued by the certitude that patriotism is the thinking man's most petty and uncomfortable torment. Isn't it somehow irresponsible, if not outright fatuous, to devote oneself to such an amorphous and ambiguous love? To pledge one's adulatory commitment to a country which is—and it is embarrassingly apparent—full of crooks, idiots, louts, boors, cutthroats, muggers, dopers, pornographers, where insanity is touted as deliverance, injustice is hailed as progress, platitudes are rewarded with fortunes, obsequiousness is praised as independence, drivel is extolled as poetry, ruthlessness is presented as integrity. And societal indifference to one's fate, regardless of one's merit and value, is the rule of life. To be sure, every other country has the same faults—some more, some less—but none is good enough, obviously, for one to bestow on it his tender loyalty as if that which was mentioned above did not exist.

On the other hand, anyone who's aware that emotions rooted in ideas, like everything else, must conform to a certain sense of proportion finds it quite demeaning not to pledge allegiance to one's daily reality. Such an evasion is the thinking man's bad conscience, even his scourge. His dignity cannot condone disloyalty to what he knows is no worse in his country than anywhere else; that knowledge relieves him from humiliating illusions. Exactly because the truth is so unprepossessing, he cannot deny fealty to what *is* his and *is* flawed. He cannot dodge faithfulness without degrading himself by abandoning that which is weak, wanting and stupid—and needs his support. There's a touch of perversity in such an attitude, but this ambivalence of impulses somehow endows patriotism—at least in my eyes—with a glowing, noble and heart-warming appeal.

2.

In Europe and Asia, patriotism is nominalistic, heavily involved with names, denominations, appellations, designations and their interactions with both history and actuality. Inherent in it is a notion of form, shape, order, a congruence of elements which are well entrenched, fixed and sealed for eternity, if possible. In America, such a relationship to reality is immaterial and meaningless. In Europe, name, image and their standing in the hierarchy of values are inseparable. Thus, priests may jog and learn how to handle a gun there, but they do both in private and never flaunt either. In America, a priest who jogs and knows about guns is admired and is written about in the newspapers. In Europe, one is a patriot by virtue of constantly thinking about one's country. In America, one is patriotic when his country *occasionally* comes to mind. This is why in Europe and Asia it's difficult to differentiate between nationalism, chauvinism and patriotism: they are genuinely interconnected. In America, such a connection is incomprehensible.

When I came to America, the first thing I noticed was that, except for the Constitution and bathrooms (particularly showers), Americans thought that everything—mores, manners, cuisine, elegance, political morality, custom tailoring, the art of conversation, bureaucracy, the quality of life—was better elsewhere. Such an attitude obviously makes Americans morally superior; someone who generously considers everyone else to be better than he manifests a venerable modesty—a mark of moral superiority. However, there are plenty of Americans who deeply believe that America is a giant hotbed of moral arrogance, self-righteousness and xenophobia. Anyone who arrives in America and keeps his eyes open immediately sees that exactly the opposite is true.

The very meaning of patriotism in America is the best litmus test. His true feelings notwithstanding, it sounds somewhat unbecoming for an Italian, for instance, to call himself a British patriot. Even if his entire life was spent in the Borough of Chelsea, his declaration of patriotic allegiance would sound slightly discordant both in the ears of a native Englishman and in his own. In America, patriotism, like adrenalin, may rise in anyone immediately after landing—and no American will see a disconcerting dissonance in this. One of the most ancient elements of the American ethos is the conviction that one becomes an American by free choice, and all humans dearly wish to be proud of their choices. Therefore, instant American patriotism is somehow a perfectly natural reaction.

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Thus, if no Spaniard would voluntarily agree to a non-Spanish toreador, no feeling of impropriety would ever cross an American's mind when hearing about a Bulgarian trapper.

Which leads us back to the very core of wholehearted American acceptance of daily syncretism, so incompatible with the Euro-Asian sense of an established order of national values, peculiarities, vanities and stigmas. Everywhere in the world there is a firm belief that no one with the name Rabinowitz could or should be a cowboy—it would be both unfeasible and unbecoming. Everywhere—except America. There's no such inhibition for the American's endemic logic, which asserts that if a Rabinowitz wants to be and is capable of being a cowboy—let him be a cowboy. If he's good at it, that's okay; if not, he'll pay for his whim. No one sees anything improper in a Leatherstocking figure with an Armenian name. No one cares. However, in Europe, people care about things like that, sometimes a bit too passionately. National incongruence, to them, is antithetical to patriotism. A toreador with the name Rabinowitz would signify the end of the Spanish culture, and not only in Spanish eyes. Every European would feel that chaos had taken over the natural order of things, and that allegiances to both symbols and realities meant nothing. Which is precisely where patriotism and chauvinism part.

3.

Those who came to America during the last half of the 20th century had advance knowledge of her from her powerful literature or, at least, from the movies. Both literature and movies have plenty in common with the reality they deal with, although literature reveals and movies only limn through reproduction. So anyone who comes here soon finds out that even if the reality is different from its portraiture in books and films, one still learns a lot about America from its fictional representations. The most seductive elements from American fiction, of course, are not here, but there are plenty of other nonfictional factors which are far more imposing than fables. Contrary to the official American state of mind, everything is better here, not just the Constitution and showers, but also interhuman relations, daily existence and common rapports between strangers. This essential betterness may, after a while, look sort of canned, or prepackaged, but even so no one can deny its superiority. Even a plastic, mass-produced fairness and camaraderie for everyday use, or as a fixture of social ethics, is better than its absence. No one in a European, or Asian, public office asks the man in the street: "What can we do for you?"—and that's the propitious and cosmic difference.

To some, this feature alone would be enough to stimulate a healthy functioning of the patriotic glands, but those who feel this way are perceived as simple, if not trivial, souls. The elite of America would eventually admit that the galactic richness of texture in American life may command some allegiance, but not much. Unfortunately, the patriotism of the elite is quite a confusing issue in America.

As a rule, elites are thankful for their good life, and they project, often mendaciously and cynically, the paradigmatic patriotic attachment to the country that gives them so much and treats them so well. In Europe and Asia, the elites are patriotic, some sincerely, some because of centuries-long conventions and deeply ingrained fears. In America, the elites have always stressed their independence from the rest of the society. Thus, it is not uncommon for much of the American elite to flaunt antipatriotism as the ultimate expression of intellectual refinement and moral sophistication. The unfathomable diversity of American everydayness—cluttered with events, dilemmas, problems that require immediate and zealous stand-taking—serves well as a playground for the games of conscience that the wealthy so enjoy. The inexhaustible American density of social issues becomes a dainty plaything, and patriotism is a nuisance one can oppose in full glory.

Moreover, during this century, it has become clear that antipatriotic feelings—stemming from cosmopolitan worldliness, internationalistic and pacifistic sentiments, or a purely radical rejection of the American universe—are for some a gold mine, a source of fame, money, career, success. After World War II, and especially after Senator McCarthy's abuse of good sense, it became even clearer that a leftist of any hue—a Marxist, communist, or just a fellow-traveler—who was endowed with any creative talent in the realm of art or culture was doomed to wealth and celebrity. Film producers, directors, movie stars, authors, columnists and playwrights who had

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Semantics in America

"Words differently arranged have a different meaning, and meanings differently arranged have a different effect."
—Pascal (1623 - 1662)

A word haunts our president and his highest counsels. The secretary of state uses it constantly, and the press has picked it up as the best way to describe something which has nothing to do with either fact or truth, although it pretends to be both. They all speak of Soviet "adventurism," which implies that the Soviets are daring hotheads who actually do not know what they are doing—that they are rowdies who should not be opposed, thwarted or combated, but just tamed.

What a clumsy inversion of the interrelationship between word and meaning. Someone will have to pay for such an abuse—either our president or all of us. Let's hope it's the former. □

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Opinions & Views

Morals & Manners

Norman Podhoretz: *Breaking Ranks;* Harper & Row; New York.

by Paul Gottfried

The New York intellectual establishment has long left its mark both upon American journalism and academic opinion, yet few have thus far discussed it with as much knowledge and critical insight as Norman Podhoretz. As editor in chief of *Commentary* since 1960, he was at first decisive in pushing this Jewish, formerly anticommunist, journal into what became, by the mid-60's, an identifiably radical-left position. Although he later disavowed his youthful radicalism, and in the process broke with old friends, Podhoretz can still evoke the past without bitterness. Some of his personality studies are particularly well wrought, like that of Jason Epstein, an enterprising publisher and founder of the *New York Review of Books.* Like Podhoretz, Epstein came out of a New York Jewish business family and majored in English at Columbia University. There in the late 40's both Epstein and Podhoretz studied with a renowned professor, Lionel Trilling. Like Trilling, his two students supported the democratic left, while upholding high academic standards and denouncing communist assaults on political liberty. By the early 60's, however, Podhoretz, under the influence of cultural radicalism, had veered much further to the left and was followed a few years later by his younger friend. Nonetheless, whereas Podhoretz eventually turned against the movement, Epstein remains even today one of its most persistent spokesmen.

The growing discord between these two can certainly be documented, but few traces of it mar these reminiscences. If they note the young Epstein's pomposity and sybaritic tastes, they also pay tribute to his professional skill and marital stability. They dutifully mention that it was Epstein who initially warned Podhoretz against association with the counterculture. The author bends over backward, moreover, to be fair to a morally disappointing teacher, Lionel Trilling. Despite Trilling's lifelong quest for social respectability, he always considered himself a man of the left. And in spite of his principled anticommunism and belief in academic decorum, he found himself unable to condemn student radicals. When leftist youths seized the buildings of Columbia University in 1969, Trilling referred to the activists as "my students" and abstained from criticizing their violence. And though some of his later lectures were abstrusely critical of new leftist anti-intellectualism, he waffled when Podhoretz, after his antiradical conversion, asked Trilling for contributions to *Commentary,* which would mean taking an open stand against the movement.

In my opinion, Trilling's behavior, as described in Podhoretz's memoirs, lacks any redeeming virtue. It lacks even those mitigating circumstances which the followers of Martin Heidegger might have claimed for that brilliant thinker's initial attempt to accommodate nazism. Heidegger, a university rector, who praised the new German order soon after Hitler's accession to power, was acting at least partially out of ignorance. Nor did he have a safe opportunity afterwards to castigate the nazis, save by means of esoteric speech. By contrast, Trilling showed his failure of nerve and moral imagination while living in a free society. Despite his long-winded defenses of the Great Heritage, he failed to oppose the thugs and ideological fanatics who assaulted that heritage—and even grew sentimental when discussing them, so great was undoubtedly his misplaced tenderness. Yet Podhoretz never censures his teacher for lacking the integrity which he himself displayed. Instead he stresses Trilling's scholarly aloofness and growing confusion about political conflicts. The explanations are really too generous, though they do increase my respect for Podhoretz as an admirably loyal person.

Breaking Ranks is certainly one of the most informative studies on American political culture. On the negative side, Podhoretz's memoirs occasionally resemble a travel diary whose author, although a would-be cosmopolite, never ventures beyond his own neighborhood. As a "liberal centrist," he views himself as being back on the political turf that he occupied twenty-five years ago. But, as Heraclitus pointed out some time before TV commentators (who nevertheless claim authorship), one never steps twice into the

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"Petulant and embarrassingly self-revealing . . ."
—*Publishers Weekly*

". . . it has to make us wonder if there isn't some truth to the accusation that he [Podhoretz] sold out."
—*New York Times*

"The book is mean, vindictive, without a trace of human compassion. There is no humor here, nor irony. The tone is maudlin, often grotesque. There are cheap shots, including a tawdry attempt to assassinate the character of Noam Chomsky. Snide, offensive, and cheap . . ."
—*Progressive*

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that he has always been at the center of something important, that he has a mission. The angelic intermediaries tell him to throw away his Bible because they themselves will show him the great book clearly and interpret its meaning for him. "I said I am willing, where am I to go?" He is ready. "Your tongue was bound so that in the time of promise which is to come you shall speak words like a sword going out of your mouth." After the visits of the angelic intermediaries, he has a great desire to prophesy. Brought back to England, he discerns that his mission has something to do with children. "These were children which He said must be suffered . . . ." It is a child he must protect. The irony here is skillfully managed. While Matty looks like the Beast in Revelation who would destroy the child, he is actually its protector.

The novel now turns to Sophy, who aptly enough loves and hates her father. Carrying out the idea suggested in Matty —what appears to be and what really is are radically different—Sophy is strikingly beautiful, recalling Henderson's lyric beauty. Her beauty and exquisite politeness conceal an evil without limit. Like Cain, she establishes her character by killing a dabchick with a stone for the pure pleasure of it. She discovers the "absolute of being weird." In her antiepiphany, she perceives nothingness, the awful darkness of the void. The way to extend simplicity into the absolute of being weird through outrage comes to her in a second antiepiphany.

> "She found a measuring rod in her hand. Look at 'ought' and 'must' and 'want' and 'need.' If they were not appropriate at the moment . . . then she touched them with her wand and they vanished."

Loving the impossibilities of darkness and hating the daylight world is her calling. Filled with a sense of power, she persuades her lover and his friend to kidnap a child at the school where Matty works. Her attempt at incest with her father having failed, this will demonstrate her commitment to outrage as the path to nothingness. Sophy lies "by doing not by saying."

Sophia (wisdom) is the evil opposite of everything she should be. Like Lilith and Jezebel, her wisdom is that of the serpent, not the dove. She should be the woman (Revelation) who bears the child and protects him with her life from the Beast. Instead she is the Beast (the antichrist) who pursues the child and would destroy him. In a satanic vision she images herself mutilating and murdering the child. The perfect criminal, as her twin sister is the perfect terrorist, she belongs to no one, the slave, instead, of self, entropy and nothingness. Her perfect evil is appropriate to the structure of the novel as the reader discovers when the angelic intermediaries tell Matty that she had been called by the Spirit but would not come. "A treasure was poured out for them and they turned their back on it. A treasure not just for them but for all of us." Through Matty and Sophy, who meet only once, the meaning of history is revealed—the battle between God and Satan. Matty dies-disappears as he came, in fire, a "burnt offering," while protecting the child from Sophy. But it is promised that a "great spirit" will stand behind "the being of the child" Matty has been guarding. "That child shall bring the spiritual language into the world and nation shall speak it unto nation."

In sorting out the various strands of this rich tapestry, the reader gets some help from Edwin Bell, a teacher, and Sim Goodchild, a bookseller. "He wants to get rid of language and has approached two people . . . who depend on language more than anything else for their existence!" They are convinced by Matty's silent message and affirm that something special has happened to them. "We broke a barrier." The three make up a circle as protection from evil spirits—bell, book and candle. What they understand from Matty does not come from "mere human breath," but from Song. "It was a single note, golden, radiant, like no singer that ever was." They experience the meaning of "In the beginning was the Word" in their change of state, a "realm of gold that grew from it a vowel lasting for an aeon." Ordinary words are the "reduplication of that endless cackle of men"; it is in the holiness of absolute silence beyond frozen speech that the meaning of the center is apprehended (T. S. Eliot). Bell speaks his seven words (Revelation, 4:11) in *ursprache,* the innocent language of the spirit, the language of paradise.

Golding's concern with the paradox of language and silence as communication is relevant to the central idea of the novel. His perception of the chaos of the contemporary world could be construed, as some did *Lord of the Flies,* as pessimism.

> "We're all mad, the whole damned race. We're wrapped in illusions, delusions, confusions about the penetrability of particles, we're all mad and in solitary confinement."

Thinking he *knows* is postmodern man's worst problem, "worse than the atom bomb, and always was." He is damned by his "own triviality." But light is shed on this otherwise hopeless situation by Matty's message, which does reveal itself in language finally in his secret journal, aptly enough, chapters 7 and 14 of the novel. While rationalism is the cause of our perceptual problems, the answer to chaos is not the gnosticism of transcendental philosophy. For man, pure reason and pure transcendence (all self or all other) are equally unsound probes into that center which is the Word made flesh. The pure, the beautiful and the good must be found in the fruitful tension between the profane and the sacred. The Spirit does indeed give the essential message in His own way, but when Matty discovers he is a man like other men by defiling himself in his sleep and by listening to Beethov-

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en's Seventh (naturally), he dances like David before the Ark, because like David he is man and still the anointed of the Lord. "What good is not directly breathed into the world by the holy spirit must come down by and through the nature of men." This, then, is Matty's incarnational view of Christian realism.

Finally, back to Mr. Pedigree, the only person with whom Matty wanted a friendly relationship. His pederasty is presented as especially repugnant, particularly as he grows older. His attempt to have his cake and eat it too is doomed by his inability to control the two impulses of his soul (Plato's *Phaedrus*). He lived in a fantasy, pretending to himself that he was "the owner of two boys: one, an example of pure beauty, the other, an earthy little man!" He becomes a human wreck because his "spiritual relationships" turn into fumbling at the flies of little boys. Matty understands finally that this is an obscene, yet truthful and accurate, symbol of Pedigree's need (our need: he is our Stetson) for love. "You think I *like* wandering round lavatories and public parks, desperate for . . . affection." Early on, Matty thought it impossible to heal Pedigree. After coming back to England, he tries unsuccessfully to draw Pedigree into his circle. But it all comes together after Matty's death-disappearance. Pedigree goes to the park with his brilliantly colored ball, the decoy for some "earthy little man." In a triumphant visionary scene, Matty appears to him in an ambience of warm, golden light. Pedigree speaks:

> "They call it so many things . . . sex, money, power, knowledge—and all the time it lies right on their skin! The thing they all want without knowing it—yet that it should be you, ugly little Matty, who really loved me! I tried to throw it away you know, but it wouldn't go. Who are you, Matty?"

"Help me," he cries, and Matty grows fiercely golden as in a fire, terrible and loving. He speaks to Pedigree, but not in human speech: *Freedom.* Despite his struggle, Matty takes him to the place of freedom and love. The strings that bound him to the brilliantly colored ball are broken.

Remembering the majestic, threatening lines which open *Paradise Lost* is the most comprehensive approach to the title of the novel. "No light, but rather darkness visible." It is particularly through Sophy that Milton's terrible imagery is worked into a contemporary setting: obdurate pride, steadfast hate and utter darkness. But it is Matty who makes darkness visible in the sense that because of him we, who wish the light, *see* the meaning of the darkness. "What is in me dark/ Illumine." The second last word belongs to Golding:

> "At the very moment when people are certain that their actions and thoughts are most hidden in darkness, they often find out to their astonishment and grief how they have been performing in the bright light of day and before an audience. Sometimes the discovery is a blinding and destroying shock. Sometimes it is gentle."

And the last word to Isaiah (35:4):

> "Courage! Do not be afraid.
> Look, your God is coming,
> vengeance is coming,
> the retribution of God:
> He is coming to save you." □

The Classic Standards of Truth and Virtue

Barry M. Goldwater: *With No Apologies;* William Morrow & Co.; New York.

by Otto J. Scott

Suppose the child who pointed out the emperor's nakedness had been slapped, carried away in disgrace, whipped and put to bed without supper? That doesn't require much imagination to visualize: we live in a world where truth-tellers are beaten more often than not—and then there is the grisly example of Barry Goldwater. That example is one of the more dramatic and important in our history, but there is little likelihood that any fashionable dramatist will put it on the boards or project it in film, for the "right people" were wrong, and the "wrong people" were right.

Just how wrong and how right these various peoples actually were is recalled for us by Goldwater in this remarkable, well-documented, clear and candid political autobiography. No full-length, in-depth reviews are to be expected regarding this masterwork in fashionable quarters, however, for it is as telling as Tacitus, whose *Annales* it resembles.

Goldwater was elected to the Senate in 1952, in the Republican landslide headed by Eisenhower, to whom he refers, nearly always, as the General. That initial victory was by a margin of only 7,000 votes, and as a junior senator under the old rules, Goldwater was not expected to make waves. From the start, however, he credited the evidence of his senses regarding the ways of Washington and the condition of the nation. This is by no means a common habit, and certainly not one generally associated with intellectuals. These, whom the prolific Anonymous once defined as "persons who know what everybody else has said or written about everything," are more apt to believe what they read and hear than what they see.

The senator, however, not only saw

Otto Scott's latest book is The Secret Six: John Brown and the Abolitionist Movement.

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but dictated his daily observations and his activities, with suitable citations and quotes, at the end of his working day for inclusion in his Alpha File. Persons apt to meander intellectually would soon find the disparity between their assumptions and the evidence of reality too embarrassing to examine, but the senator from Arizona is what Francis W. Newman called a "once-born." He is one of those fortunate persons who seems to have always had an intuitive harmony with the universe, an untroubled belief in God, and an unwavering allegiance to classic standards of honor, truth and virtue.

Neurotics disbelieve in the very existence of the once-born: they suspect deceit and pretense. But neurotics suspect everything, dislike everything, and disbelieve in even brief moments of happiness. That is not to say that the once-born do not have flaws. As a general rule they are apt to disbelieve in the reality of evil, being unable to see any rational justification for it, and being unaware of the satisfactions it brings to its addicts.

Senator Goldwater was apparently saved from this flaw of innocence by intellectual honesty. He admired Eisenhower, to whom he felt grateful for creating the Republican tide that opened the Senate to newcomers. But he was disappointed when Ike retained Roosevelt's and Truman's old upper bureaucracy, and at the General's indifference to the need to restore a strong Republican Party to the political scene. True to form, Goldwater told the General these opinions face to face, and Ike liked him for his candor, as well as for his good will. Vice President Nixon was another matter. Goldwater characterizes him as "a cold man with great self-confidence and a one-track mind centered on the advancement of Richard Nixon." From this and other comments, it is clear that Goldwater respected Eisenhower and had affection for him, but found Nixon hard to like.

He knew them both very well, and was drawn into the U-2 affair, the struggles against the terroristic tactics of such huge unions as the UAW, and other Eisenhower administration crises. Goldwater also knew—and liked—John F. Kennedy. From his description it is clear that Kennedy's drive for the presidency was masterminded, to a far greater extent than the media ever disclosed to the nation, by old Joe Kennedy, the clan patriarch, leader and moneybags. The campaign old Kennedy financed and that his sons conducted was—Goldwater makes clear—vicious, dirty and corrupt.

This was the first great instance in which the media reversed the truth and distorted issues of great significance to the nation. Nixon, it will be recalled, was denounced as having conducted a mudslinging campaign against Helen Gahagan Douglas on his first try for office. His sin was to repeatedly tie Mrs. Douglas to various left-wing groups and causes—all of which were quite true. Nevertheless, he was labeled a hatchet man for telling these truths, and Kennedy—in contrast—was depicted as the brilliant author of *Profiles in Courage* (a ghosted book), the Harvard Scholar, the Spirit of Youth. Yet Kennedy's attacks on Humphrey in West Virginia were below the belt in any company, and his victory in that state was so suspicious that Goldwater hired a special investigator to determine whether illegalities were involved.

To his surprise the investigator brought back proof in the form of 16 signed affidavits with names, places and sums. The evidence was turned over to Attorney General William Rogers, whose courage proved unequal to the task. Rather than face the mighty Kennedy machine, Rogers sat on the evidence. Later, says Goldwater, there was evidence of widespread illegalities in Illinois and Texas during the election. Ike was informed and he called on Rogers. Rogers said it was "too late" to do anything, and Nixon later thought it would "injure" the nation to make an issue of the outcome. Goldwater is crisp about this shrinking from confrontation. "The sanctity of the ballot," he says, "should take first consideration."

Although some stories surfaced in the media about this great theft of the presidency by political adventurers, the majority of the nation was inundated with media triumph over the defeat of the hated Nixon. In the Senate, aware that Kennedy had deliberately and knowingly misrepresented the strength of the nation's military versus the U.S.S.R., Goldwater watched with disgust as the White House fumbled the Bay of Pigs attempt to overthrow Castro. As a senator, Goldwater was familiar with the original plan as well as with the background and rise of the Cuban dictator, who had benefited from the assistance of the *New York Times* and liberal groups throughout the U.S. and other parts of the West. During the Cuban missile crisis, Kennedy called Goldwater to the White House to learn his views. Later, said Goldwater, "This charming young man . . . lost his nerve, and conveyed to world communism its first outpost in the Western Hemisphere."

Within a fairly short time, it was clear that Goldwater would contest Kennedy for the presidency. Both men joked about it, and shared a common ability to oppose without hate. Goldwater could do that, and liked Kennedy—but he did not respect him. When Lyndon Johnson was forced—says Goldwater—to run as vice president, under a threat of having the sources of his fortune investigated, Goldwater sent him a letter he reproduced in this book. In part, it reads: "It is difficult to imagine a person like you running in a second spot to a weaker man . . ."

Until Kennedy was assassinated, Goldwater looked forward to the contest. Afterward he says, "the bullet that killed John Kennedy also destroyed whatever possibility there ever was for a Goldwater presidency." The senator, recognizing the nation's mood, decided not to run; Lyndon Johnson had inher-

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ited the mantle and would be invulnerable.

There were other reasons. Goldwater's lifestyle was private; the exposure and the pomp of the American presidency today, so dear to the hearts of Johnson and Kennedy, did not appeal to the Arizonian. Another reason was that he appreciated as did few others the immense entrenched power of a bureaucracy that had defeated Eisenhower, Kennedy, and would certainly not work harmoniously with a conservative Republican. In the final analysis, however, his real reason was practical: he knew he could not win.

The fact was that he was drafted. Clifton White, William Rusher, John Ashbrook and others had organized a movement inside the Republican Party, where Goldwater was already well known and liked. The agony of these young volunteers over the course of the nation was real, and Goldwater acceded to their entreaties. A decision was made to enter the primaries and contest the forces of Nelson Rockefeller. It is unlikely that either Goldwater or his youthful partisans realized that Rockefeller was, for all his wealth and influence, only the lead horseman in a huge army arrayed against them, armed with the power of the media, supported by every liberal-to-left group in the land.

Their first charge, based on criticisms that Goldwater had made of the *actuarial* system of the Social Security system, was that the candidate was out to strip the elderly, the sick, the destitute from the stipends they received from the government. From there, the charges went downhill, and the denunciations of Goldwater sank to levels never before known against a presidential candidate in the United States. Not even Lincoln, not even Wilson in defeat, not even Jefferson or Jackson ever received such a press. Goldwater was accused of fanaticism, of seeking a nuclear war, of racism, ignorance and a malignity of purpose that made some, in such liberal-dominated sectors as New York City, wonder that so unqualified a candidate could appear at all. Even Goldwater supporters were attacked and "compared," says the senator, "to Communists and Nazis, to the Ku Klux Klan."

The culmination of this campaign came in the Cow Palace in San Francisco, where the Republican Party faithful, headed by ex-President Eisenhower, came to believe that the media of this nation were their enemies. That belief was no illusion. Goldwater, who now says ruefully that his cause was lost the night he was nominated, rose to make an acceptance speech that contained a memorable sentence, based on Cicero's denunciation of Catiline. "I must remind you, Lords, Senators," said Cicero, "that extreme patriotism in the defense of freedom is no crime and let me respectfully remind you that pusillanimity in the pursuit of justice is no virtue." Goldwater's paraphrase was succinct; there was once a time when all educated Americans would have recognized both the sentiment and its source, but in 1964 such Americans were in short supply. Nelson Rockefeller immediately charged that Goldwater had risen in San Francisco to defend extremism. That rock, unerringly hurled, brought blood to the candidate from which, in the course of the campaign, he was never again free.

The moment is worth freezing, for it marked a turn in the road for all Americans. From the disastrous Goldwater campaign onward, the media would intervene to slant American politics much as the government has intervened to distort America's productivity, commerce, technology and private sectors. Goldwater himself, deeply wounded by his experience, was grateful to be able to return to private life from 1964's end until 1968.

Returned to the Senate, Goldwater had a large and important role to play in both Nixon administrations. He was high in the councils of the party when Agnew was forced to resign, and his comments on that event are both illuminating and disturbing. Senator Goldwater is a friend of Gerald Ford's, and his comment on Ford's pardon for Nixon is terse. "The lynch mob had the noose around the neck of the man they hated," he says, "and Ford stopped the hanging. It was an act of courage which should have endeared him to every citizen who loves the Republic. It didn't."

Had Ford not intervened, says the senator, a "Roman holiday" would have ensued around Nixon, and "it would have made Ford unbeatable." That judgment, as clear and frank as possible, is very hard to fault. In fact, Barry Morris Goldwater by this book, but even more by his life and actions, his positions and presentations, proves himself a great man. It is our sorrow that he rose among us at a time when greatness generates jealousy and hatred. These may well be, as Goldwater makes clear, the final days of the Republic. He devotes the last sections of his autobiography to an analysis of the forces and groups which would like to destroy the United States. Nothing from that section will be quoted in this review, for it is the duty of citizens concerned about our nation to read it for themselves.

In the course of this exercise, they should also read the preceding parts of this book, which is one of the most important historical documents of our time. Like a live grenade, it explodes a great deal of nonsense, evil-doing and hypocrisy. It also—and for this Goldwater deserves all our gratitude—manages to exude health, sanity and even optimism. He is sure we can retain our freedom, but to learn why he is so sure, you must obtain a copy for yourself. □

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A Wistful Warning

Eve Babitz: *Sex and Rage;* Alfred A. Knopf; New York.

by Becki Klute

A glance at the title might make one expect another women's-lib tract—not so. To look just a little further, the dust-jacket description, for instance, could give the impression that it is a paean to the Beautiful People's counterculture. There will, of course, be a multitude of libcult folks who ignore anything other than that which they can interpret as praise of their glittering peculiarities, and who will laud Ms. Babitz for what they *think* she has written. But most of those libcult folks have a sort of myopia which no ophthamologist could ever cure; they interpret anything which does not clearly condemn as praise—subtleties escape minds submerged in drugs and Warholesque philosophy.

Ms. Babitz has taken a long, hard look at the Beautiful People—and she doesn't like what she sees. She admits the superficial attractiveness of the BP lifestyle (this is what the libcultists will call praise), but as she probes beneath its surface she finds some rather ugly things.

Like most girls out of high school during the 60's her heroine, Jacaranda, is looking for adventure. She is pretty, she is young, she is an avid California surfer. She is definitely a "young lady eager for a good time." What could be more natural than for such a girl to become involved with an older, married man, an actor? A doorway opens, and Jacaranda strolls heedlessly through it to a world of actors, rock stars and drug dealers, all of whom are unveiled in all their shallow selfishness.

But Ms. Babitz reserves her most biting irony for the jet-set Beautiful People. The BP float through life in amorphous circles held together by euphoric camaraderie. Jacaranda privately christens the clique of her new friends "the barge." The allusion to the notorious Egyptian queen is obvious, but remember too that a barge is also a large, unwieldy boat with no power of its own — it must always be pulled along by something else. Despite whatever surface beauty it may possess, it is essentially helpless, useless without assistance. The power that propels this particular barge is Etienne, the ultimate personification of libcult cynicism. The BP lifestyle, of course, requires money, lots of it, which someone must provide. Etienne, the provider, is an astute businessman whose main ambition is "to take over the world." Clearly then, Etienne cannot go through life befuddled with drugs and booze. He simply peoples his barge with whoever amuses him, and what amuses him most is watching people destroy themselves. The ego of the power behind the BP is thus massaged by the pathetic sight of burned-out hangers-on:

> "It was as though the more pasty-faced and impossible she became with each passing month, the more it pleased him watching her drunkenly delude herself that she was sailing along . . . There was something in Etienne that made him sympathetic to self-destruction of all kinds, for he would have gladly blown himself to smithereens for fun . . . "

Finally perceiving this cynicism, Jacaranda "jumps off the barge," and gropes her way toward reality. Somewhere along the way, she begins to write—and it sells. Her writing becomes a sort of life line, barely strong enough to keep her afloat in the treacherous tides of alcoholism. Jumping off the barge proved easier than shedding the habits she had acquired during her stay on it. Oddly, Ms. Babitz seems to see alcohol as a greater threat than drugs. Although both are destructive, she sees booze as actually the more dangerous, perhaps because of its apparent innocuousness. She makes it clear that they both provide the same thing—escape: alcohol is simply slower and only a little less dangerous. Through her alcoholic haze, Jacaranda understands that for her writing to progress she must visit her agent in New York, and the thought terrifies her. But she senses that survival lies in that direction. It takes a simple girl, sometimes considered simple-minded, to thrust Jacaranda back into reality. Through their own fears and confusion about life, each girl sets the feet of the other on the road back to normalcy.

> "... pretentious schmaltz. *Sex and Rage* is a cheat all the way ..."
> —*Village Voice*

Once in New York, terrified but not drinking, Jacaranda begins to look and feel better and better, despite the occasional martini that tiptoes across her brain. The world of publishing looks mostly sane, appealing, far removed from the barge. She calls an old friend who has "made it"—his picture is on the cover of *People*—and runs smack into Etienne and the barge. As she resists their peculiar magnetism, one wants to applaud; but a till-now normal friend of Jacaranda's can be seen being pulled irresistibly into their "magic" circle, and one wants to weep. The vicious cycle is beginning afresh; only the victim is new.

Sex and Rage could be contrasted to Jacqueline Susann's *Valley of the Dolls,* which had a similar premise of innocents drawn into a seemingly fabulous world, only to find it artificial and ultimately degrading. But where Susann wrote to titillate, Babitz writes to warn. Susann's "isn't-this-exciting" attitude is almost

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worshipful; Babitz's view, especially toward the end, seems almost wistful. It's as if she's disappointed that what seemed so lovely turned out to be so foul: "It will never be the same again." It's an echo of what every adult feels when bidding goodbye, sometimes reluctantly, to childhood; even the worst aspects are tinged with the rosy glow of innocence, now lost—and one knows that reality will never be quite as perfect or quite as easy as those childish illusions.

Subtitled "Advice to Young Ladies Eager for a Good Time," Babitz's message is clear, her portraits stark. She makes a good case for normalcy, for love and self-discipline rather than "sex and rage." Let's hope it comes out in paperback: all the young ladies to whom Ms. Babitz speaks will undoubtedly buy it, caught by the title, and perhaps a few lives will turn toward the nourishment of sanity instead of the glamour of lunacy. □

Prophylactics as Medium and Message

Marge Piercy: *Vida;* Summit Books; New York.

by Gary S. Vasilash

In the fall of 1969 the Rolling Stones performed in Detroit's Olympia sports arena. The crowd was standing room only, composed of a broad section of the area's youth: rock-concert ticket prices had yet to hit the current extraordinary rate—which is still eagerly paid. (It's interesting to speculate on how these same people react to the increases in gasoline prices: how many papers are being written for composition classes that flay the money-grubbing oil companies?) The final number of the evening was "Street Fighting Man," the lyrics of which are a defiant lament (an admitted oxymoron) about how there is nothing for a "poor boy" to do but to become a rock singer because "in a sleepy Detroit town, there's just no place for a street-fighting man."

As Mick Jagger, the group's multimillion-dollar poor boy, bleated out those last words, he began to dance across the stage, showering the crowd with red rose petals, which were held in a construction-worker's helmet, popular demonstration attire. At the same time, flyers fell on the crowd. The message, conveyed in a graphic shriek with the obligatory clenched-fist design, was for the youngsters to become street fighters in the cause of the Weathermen, the militant offshoot of the Students for a Democratic Society. Roses and revolution. Heady stuff, that.

Since that time, much has changed. The Rolling Stones are richer, thanks to the market system that didn't go down in the blazes of a street-fighting revolution. Young people still throng to concerts, literally packing the stadiums like so many cattle, often with no prospect of a seat. But what of the pamphlet-packing renegades?

Some answers are provided by ex-Detroiter and ex-SDS member Marge Piercy in her new novel *Vida.* Instead of the SDS, we are shown SAW, Students Against the War. And the Weather Underground (the Weathermen and women on the run) is transformed into the Network. At the center of all this is Vida Asch (a.k.a., Davida Whippletree, Vinnie Rapaport, Peregrine, etc.), age 36. We see her in the present, on the lam from the authorities, and in a series of flashbacks to the period from 1967.

The first thing one notices about the so-called revolutionaries that populate the book is that they are all incredibly beautiful or handsome. Take Vida: "she looked good . . . Yes, she was looking good . . . ." That's her own opinion. An ex-admirer—one whom Vida is certain wants her body—tells her, "You were really a beautiful girl, Vida, you know that?" Her husband, Leigh Pfeiffer, thinking back says, "Girls new in the Movement that spring. You were the best looking . . . ." Another tells her, "Vida, you never age. I think you're more beautiful now . . ." than in the days of flyers and roses.

And Leigh's no slouch himself: "Sometimes she could wish he were less striking in appearance." Leigh is the "Movement's media star," which means that he is a disc jockey on a radio station (WBAD, of course) who makes documentaries on chic issues. He attracts women like a rock star, and is also the radicals' "resident gourmet and wine expert." A third important character is Joel White, 26, an Army deserter at age 19. Vida describes him as having "a small slightly puckered arrogant mouth, beautiful ivory teeth, a well-modeled flairing nose, arched brows, a perfect lightly cleft chin." The list could go on; although the book is touted as a work of political art, the characters are straight out of a gothic romance readily available at any supermarket check-out counter.

"We believe Vida . . ."

—John Leonard
New York Times

Before looking at the politics in the book, a quick sketch of the relationships of these acid-rock Jacobins is in order. Leigh is Vida's second husband. Her first, a Greek, is mentioned, just why is never made clear; a gothic romance requires a touch of the international.

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But if the first marriage is like the second, then Vasos is better off alone. Although Vida and Leigh were united in a ceremony, it seems as if they didn't want to be married, but at the same time, they did want to be. For example, reminiscing, Vida says to Leigh, "Remember how hard it was for us to break out of that box? Everybody treating us as a couple. People constantly called you 'a married man' and me 'a married woman' till we felt like we'd turned into our parents." Lest that dread feeling last too long, they do their best to hop between the sheets with just about anyone who comes their way. And since the heroine has a high degree of revolutionary political consciousness, the gender of the person doesn't matter. Neither is she middle-class squeamish: at one point "she felt as if she was in heat," and at another, her partner makes "a sound such as an animal." Among people who want to make the world a better place, such audio-thermal effects are generally considered symptoms of higher humanness.

When the book opens, Leigh tells Vida he is working on a divorce. She is shocked. After all, she has only been underground since 1970, had long relationships with both a man (a fiery, swashbuckling Irish type) and a woman (who is sensitive, artistic and takes part in some of the Network's 60-odd bombings), and talks to her husband on a pay phone at least once a month. Don't their occasional romantic rendezvous count for anything, Vida demands. But Leigh, pushing 40 and developing a pot belly, has acquired an admiring 26-year-old—and has also gotten her pregnant, although he doesn't let Vida know it. He seems to have understood where open relationships close. Vida is outraged by Leigh, but within a matter of two days she is violently in love with Joel, who is the same age as Leigh's new object of affection.

The political angle of the book is trivial and messy. The banner under which Vida Asch marches is not exactly that of Marx and Lenin, but rather Aristippus and the early Cyrenaics: the flowing silk scarf of vulgar hedonism. Not only does she seem to confuse the satisfaction of her illimitable sexual needs with social activism (the acts are graphically detailed), but there is more emphasis on food and eating in *Vida* than in anything this side of a cookbook. And the fare is not proletarian potatoes or organic oatmeal. In the first two chapters of the book she consumes: a gourmet chicken dinner accented by a Vouvray wine; a boiled lobster dinner complete with clams, Amontillado dry sherry and black bread; a French paté, Port-Salut and Camembert cheese, and a vintage Zinfandel. One must keep up one's fighting strength to bring about the decline and fall of the American empire.

But let's perform the near-impossible and overlook the tawdry sex (it would take a computer study to track Vida's couplings in the novel) and gluttony and ask the question why Vida Asch is a revolutionary and not a self-employed call girl. Blame it on President John Kennedy. Vida had been "taken in completely by Kennedy" and "believed that Jack and Bobby would do wonders for civil rights." But then Johnson took over, and "she had come to hate him as the one who showed the corporate inside of Camelot, the imperialistic dreams behind the clean-cut Harvard rhetoric . . . He had made her see how duped and silly she had been weeping at the cortege in black and white on the television in the dormitory lounge." Vida is not one to be duped, so it's full speed ahead, into the SAW. Since she's one of the more charismatic of the radicals, she rises to the top of the heap. Indeed, she even gets her photograph in *Life* magazine. We see Vida marching, organizing, attending meetings, making speeches and so on. It doesn't seem to matter much to her why she acts. Instead, it is like casual sex: a momentary flash of excitement, there is nothing deeper to be gained or realized.

When an attempt is made to rationalize the acts, the contradictions that form the base of the character that this novel upholds as a paradigm of the political person of the age are painfully obvious. Vida says, "I want a movement that changes the way people think." Six pages later, "She mistrusted all decisions lately, because stopping to think, to weigh alternatives seemed fused with cowardice. Thinking itself was suspect . . . ." The pale cast of doubt won't ever cross Vida's forehead. A prime example of the type of thinking that Miss Piercy apparently admires can be seen by noting the adverb she uses when the band of revolutionaries has been thwarted in its attempt to plant a bomb in a military induction center and must decide what to do: " 'We might as well bomb something,' Kevin said reasonably . . . ." Reasonably? If that's *reason,* then what should be considered the consequences of insanity in a world of Vidas, Kevins, et al.?

It would be tedious to go into the revolutionary actions and sexual affairs (often synonymous) that make up *Vida.* But one of the last escapades must be noted since it is timely, and since it can be taken as something of a metaphor for the novel. Joel tries to convince Vida that they must protest against nuclear-power plants. Vida initially dismisses it as "basically a bourgeois issue," but then realizing that she will lose her young man if she doesn't go along with him, she convinces herself, and goes to great lengths to convince the board of directors of the Network (note their corporate terminology).

One of the "actions" that the group performs in its antinuclear-power crusade is the littering of the Vermont and New Hampshire countryside from a stolen plane. The trash: inflated condoms with attached notes describing the dangers of radiation. Do not both the message and the medium amount to an ultimate symbol for the woman, her mind, her human values, her ideals? □

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Forbidden Tales

Martin Green: *Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire;* Basic Books; New York.

by Gordon M. Pradl

Under the covers night after night my flashlight made voyages to distant lands possible. Expectantly, my fingers rushed to turn the page as the first mate struggled to ward off a marauding band of savages. Cornered, he managed to wrestle free a spear, but then fatigue overtook me and thoughts of the adventure slowly melded into my inner dreams of consciousness.

Stories pretend to be about the past; in reality they are about the future. In revealing the themes and conflicts of earlier experiences, stories prepare us for events that are yet to come. Without some system of expectations we are helpless in facing new circumstances. Without an identity we are at the mercy of others. Stories, through their myth-making capacity, give us both a system of expectations and an identity. In our imaginative transactions with stories, we turn action into experience, and thus we learn who we are in order that we can choose who we will become.

It is the peculiar power of narrative to project us forward into new possibilities. Yet, as in other areas of our lives, authorities would tell us which stories to believe and which to discard. For to gain control of a culture's stories is to gain control over the very life of that culture.

Similarly, to understand what is really happening in the hearts and minds of a particular people we must penetrate to the core of their everyday stories, to those stories that have left the deepest impression on the ways in which that people have come to view the world. We must not simply accept the stories that the academy may deem respectable. But herein lies a real problem for modern man, whose institutions of wisdom, no longer indigenous, have served to separate high culture from low culture, especially in terms of realms of experience, rather than in terms of quality of experience. The chief result of such a split is that many of the stories which may provide the primary moving force behind a culture, say in the realm of work or the marketplace, lose their status in relation to those stories which supposedly better reflect more "civilized" traits.

As a consequence of this devaluing of the stories of the low or unrefined culture, less imaginative energy goes into their perpetuation, because the keenest minds of the time direct their performances elsewhere. The people, of course, are not deprived of their stories; rather, they are left with stories greatly diminished in imaginative insight and artistic quality. When this occurs, and we lose touch with the essences of these stories, we lose the opportunity to imaginatively work through the issues and viable futures embodied in them.

In *Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire,* a work of literary criticism which properly becomes a work of brilliant cultural criticism, Martin Green suggests that since the late 1700's the adventure tale has fallen prey to this phenomenon of cultural dualism. As a result, Green argues, we have failed to gain a crucial interior view into the direction our imperialist culture has taken, because the intellectual class for the most part has failed to participate in the creation and retelling of those adventure tales so central to our political and economic life. "Insofar as serious writers have turned away from the adventure tale, and its subject matter, the frontier and the empire, they have turned away from an essential part of modern history, and that turning away has weakened the character of their seriousness."

Beginning with Defoe, who, of course, has not exactly been neglected in literary circles owing to his seminal connection with the rise of the novel, Green traces a course to include Scott and the *Waverly* novels, Cooper and the Leatherstocking tales, and Tolstoy and *The Cossacks,* before voyaging through selected works of Mark Twain, Rudyard Kipling and Joseph Conrad. This is hardly an unknown line-up, Conrad, for one, having been recognized by F. R. Leavis as part of the great tradition in the novel, yet the perspective from which Green views their adventure tales challenges established critical assumptions.

In re-evaluating the adventure stories of these authors, Green is not seeking to offer exhaustive critical readings; rather, he wants to establish the existence of various cultural motifs so as to force critics to deal more openly with the break in 18th-century Britain (and consequently in other Western nations) between the exterior sensibility directly responding to the challenges of empire with its question of economic expansion and the subjugation of primitive peoples and the sensibility which turned inward toward matters of human relations and states of being. In the first instance, the literary expression of cultural issues gave rise to the vigorous tales of adventure, though frequently, as in the case of Scott, these tales were cloaked in the trappings of romance; in the second instance, the domestic novel of manners was born. Thus occurred a fundamental split between the stories of the brothers and the stories of the sisters, both traditions ironically being fathered by Defoe, which is clearly evident when *Robinson Crusoe* is contrasted with his *Religious Courtship* and *The Family.* On the one side, literature boldly explored the kinds of character

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that he has always been at the center of something important, that he has a mission. The angelic intermediaries tell him to throw away his Bible because they themselves will show him the great book clearly and interpret its meaning for him. "I said I am willing, where am I to go?" He is ready. "Your tongue was bound so that in the time of promise which is to come you shall speak words like a sword going out of your mouth." After the visits of the angelic intermediaries, he has a great desire to prophesy. Brought back to England, he discerns that his mission has something to do with children. "These were children which He said must be suffered . . . ." It is a child he must protect. The irony here is skillfully managed. While Matty looks like the Beast in Revelation who would destroy the child, he is actually its protector.

The novel now turns to Sophy, who aptly enough loves and hates her father. Carrying out the idea suggested in Matty —what appears to be and what really is are radically different—Sophy is strikingly beautiful, recalling Henderson's lyric beauty. Her beauty and exquisite politeness conceal an evil without limit. Like Cain, she establishes her character by killing a dabchick with a stone for the pure pleasure of it. She discovers the "absolute of being weird." In her antiepiphany, she perceives nothingness, the awful darkness of the void. The way to extend simplicity into the absolute of being weird through outrage comes to her in a second antiepiphany.

> "She found a measuring rod in her hand. Look at 'ought' and 'must' and 'want' and 'need.' If they were not appropriate at the moment . . . then she touched them with her wand and they vanished."

Loving the impossibilities of darkness and hating the daylight world is her calling. Filled with a sense of power, she persuades her lover and his friend to kidnap a child at the school where Matty works. Her attempt at incest with her father having failed, this will demonstrate her commitment to outrage as the path to nothingness. Sophy lies "by doing not by saying."

Sophia (wisdom) is the evil opposite of everything she should be. Like Lilith and Jezebel, her wisdom is that of the serpent, not the dove. She should be the woman (Revelation) who bears the child and protects him with her life from the Beast. Instead she is the Beast (the antichrist) who pursues the child and would destroy him. In a satanic vision she images herself mutilating and murdering the child. The perfect criminal, as her twin sister is the perfect terrorist, she belongs to no one, the slave, instead, of self, entropy and nothingness. Her perfect evil is appropriate to the structure of the novel as the reader discovers when the angelic intermediaries tell Matty that she had been called by the Spirit but would not come. "A treasure was poured out for them and they turned their back on it. A treasure not just for them but for all of us." Through Matty and Sophy, who meet only once, the meaning of history is revealed—the battle between God and Satan. Matty dies-disappears as he came, in fire, a "burnt offering," while protecting the child from Sophy. But it is promised that a "great spirit" will stand behind "the being of the child" Matty has been guarding. "That child shall bring the spiritual language into the world and nation shall speak it unto nation."

In sorting out the various strands of this rich tapestry, the reader gets some help from Edwin Bell, a teacher, and Sim Goodchild, a bookseller. "He wants to get rid of language and has approached two people . . . who depend on language more than anything else for their existence!" They are convinced by Matty's silent message and affirm that something special has happened to them. "We broke a barrier." The three make up a circle as protection from evil spirits—bell, book and candle. What they understand from Matty does not come from "mere human breath," but from Song. "It was a single note, golden, radiant, like no singer that ever was." They experience the meaning of "In the beginning was the Word" in their change of state, a "realm of gold that grew from it a vowel lasting for an aeon." Ordinary words are the "reduplication of that endless cackle of men"; it is in the holiness of absolute silence beyond frozen speech that the meaning of the center is apprehended (T. S. Eliot). Bell speaks his seven words (Revelation, 4:11) in *ursprache,* the innocent language of the spirit, the language of paradise.

Golding's concern with the paradox of language and silence as communication is relevant to the central idea of the novel. His perception of the chaos of the contemporary world could be construed, as some did *Lord of the Flies,* as pessimism.

> "We're all mad, the whole damned race. We're wrapped in illusions, delusions, confusions about the penetrability of particles, we're all mad and in solitary confinement."

Thinking he *knows* is postmodern man's worst problem, "worse than the atom bomb, and always was." He is damned by his "own triviality." But light is shed on this otherwise hopeless situation by Matty's message, which does reveal itself in language finally in his secret journal, aptly enough, chapters 7 and 14 of the novel. While rationalism is the cause of our perceptual problems, the answer to chaos is not the gnosticism of transcendental philosophy. For man, pure reason and pure transcendence (all self or all other) are equally unsound probes into that center which is the Word made flesh. The pure, the beautiful and the good must be found in the fruitful tension between the profane and the sacred. The Spirit does indeed give the essential message in His own way, but when Matty discovers he is a man like other men by defiling himself in his sleep and by listening to Beethov-

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en's Seventh (naturally), he dances like David before the Ark, because like David he is man and still the anointed of the Lord. "What good is not directly breathed into the world by the holy spirit must come down by and through the nature of men." This, then, is Matty's incarnational view of Christian realism.

Finally, back to Mr. Pedigree, the only person with whom Matty wanted a friendly relationship. His pederasty is presented as especially repugnant, particularly as he grows older. His attempt to have his cake and eat it too is doomed by his inability to control the two impulses of his soul (Plato's *Phaedrus*). He lived in a fantasy, pretending to himself that he was "the owner of two boys: one, an example of pure beauty, the other, an earthy little man!" He becomes a human wreck because his "spiritual relationships" turn into fumbling at the flies of little boys. Matty understands finally that this is an obscene, yet truthful and accurate, symbol of Pedigree's need (our need: he is our Stetson) for love. "You think I *like* wandering round lavatories and public parks, desperate for . . . affection." Early on, Matty thought it impossible to heal Pedigree. After coming back to England, he tries unsuccessfully to draw Pedigree into his circle. But it all comes together after Matty's death-disappearance. Pedigree goes to the park with his brilliantly colored ball, the decoy for some "earthy little man." In a triumphant visionary scene, Matty appears to him in an ambience of warm, golden light. Pedigree speaks:

> "They call it so many things . . . sex, money, power, knowledge—and all the time it lies right on their skin! The thing they all want without knowing it—yet that it should be you, ugly little Matty, who really loved me! I tried to throw it away you know, but it wouldn't go. Who are you, Matty?"

"Help me," he cries, and Matty grows fiercely golden as in a fire, terrible and loving. He speaks to Pedigree, but not in human speech: *Freedom.* Despite his struggle, Matty takes him to the place of freedom and love. The strings that bound him to the brilliantly colored ball are broken.

Remembering the majestic, threatening lines which open *Paradise Lost* is the most comprehensive approach to the title of the novel. "No light, but rather darkness visible." It is particularly through Sophy that Milton's terrible imagery is worked into a contemporary setting: obdurate pride, steadfast hate and utter darkness. But it is Matty who makes darkness visible in the sense that because of him we, who wish the light, *see* the meaning of the darkness. "What is in me dark/ Illumine." The second last word belongs to Golding:

> "At the very moment when people are certain that their actions and thoughts are most hidden in darkness, they often find out to their astonishment and grief how they have been performing in the bright light of day and before an audience. Sometimes the discovery is a blinding and destroying shock. Sometimes it is gentle."

And the last word to Isaiah (35:4):

> "Courage! Do not be afraid.
> Look, your God is coming,
> vengeance is coming,
> the retribution of God:
> He is coming to save you." □

The Classic Standards of Truth and Virtue

Barry M. Goldwater: *With No Apologies;* William Morrow & Co.; New York.

by Otto J. Scott

Suppose the child who pointed out the emperor's nakedness had been slapped, carried away in disgrace, whipped and put to bed without supper? That doesn't require much imagination to visualize: we live in a world where truth-tellers are beaten more often than not—and then there is the grisly example of Barry Goldwater. That example is one of the more dramatic and important in our history, but there is little likelihood that any fashionable dramatist will put it on the boards or project it in film, for the "right people" were wrong, and the "wrong people" were right.

Just how wrong and how right these various peoples actually were is recalled for us by Goldwater in this remarkable, well-documented, clear and candid political autobiography. No full-length, in-depth reviews are to be expected regarding this masterwork in fashionable quarters, however, for it is as telling as Tacitus, whose *Annales* it resembles.

Goldwater was elected to the Senate in 1952, in the Republican landslide headed by Eisenhower, to whom he refers, nearly always, as the General. That initial victory was by a margin of only 7,000 votes, and as a junior senator under the old rules, Goldwater was not expected to make waves. From the start, however, he credited the evidence of his senses regarding the ways of Washington and the condition of the nation. This is by no means a common habit, and certainly not one generally associated with intellectuals. These, whom the prolific Anonymous once defined as "persons who know what everybody else has said or written about everything," are more apt to believe what they read and hear than what they see.

The senator, however, not only saw

Otto Scott's latest book is The Secret Six: John Brown and the Abolitionist Movement.

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but dictated his daily observations and his activities, with suitable citations and quotes, at the end of his working day for inclusion in his Alpha File. Persons apt to meander intellectually would soon find the disparity between their assumptions and the evidence of reality too embarrassing to examine, but the senator from Arizona is what Francis W. Newman called a "once-born." He is one of those fortunate persons who seems to have always had an intuitive harmony with the universe, an untroubled belief in God, and an unwavering allegiance to classic standards of honor, truth and virtue.

Neurotics disbelieve in the very existence of the once-born: they suspect deceit and pretense. But neurotics suspect everything, dislike everything, and disbelieve in even brief moments of happiness. That is not to say that the once-born do not have flaws. As a general rule they are apt to disbelieve in the reality of evil, being unable to see any rational justification for it, and being unaware of the satisfactions it brings to its addicts.

Senator Goldwater was apparently saved from this flaw of innocence by intellectual honesty. He admired Eisenhower, to whom he felt grateful for creating the Republican tide that opened the Senate to newcomers. But he was disappointed when Ike retained Roosevelt's and Truman's old upper bureaucracy, and at the General's indifference to the need to restore a strong Republican Party to the political scene. True to form, Goldwater told the General these opinions face to face, and Ike liked him for his candor, as well as for his good will. Vice President Nixon was another matter. Goldwater characterizes him as "a cold man with great self-confidence and a one-track mind centered on the advancement of Richard Nixon." From this and other comments, it is clear that Goldwater respected Eisenhower and had affection for him, but found Nixon hard to like.

He knew them both very well, and was drawn into the U-2 affair, the struggles against the terroristic tactics of such huge unions as the UAW, and other Eisenhower administration crises. Goldwater also knew—and liked—John F. Kennedy. From his description it is clear that Kennedy's drive for the presidency was masterminded, to a far greater extent than the media ever disclosed to the nation, by old Joe Kennedy, the clan patriarch, leader and moneybags. The campaign old Kennedy financed and that his sons conducted was—Goldwater makes clear—vicious, dirty and corrupt.

This was the first great instance in which the media reversed the truth and distorted issues of great significance to the nation. Nixon, it will be recalled, was denounced as having conducted a mudslinging campaign against Helen Gahagan Douglas on his first try for office. His sin was to repeatedly tie Mrs. Douglas to various left-wing groups and causes—all of which were quite true. Nevertheless, he was labeled a hatchet man for telling these truths, and Kennedy—in contrast—was depicted as the brilliant author of *Profiles in Courage* (a ghosted book), the Harvard Scholar, the Spirit of Youth. Yet Kennedy's attacks on Humphrey in West Virginia were below the belt in any company, and his victory in that state was so suspicious that Goldwater hired a special investigator to determine whether illegalities were involved.

To his surprise the investigator brought back proof in the form of 16 signed affidavits with names, places and sums. The evidence was turned over to Attorney General William Rogers, whose courage proved unequal to the task. Rather than face the mighty Kennedy machine, Rogers sat on the evidence. Later, says Goldwater, there was evidence of widespread illegalities in Illinois and Texas during the election. Ike was informed and he called on Rogers. Rogers said it was "too late" to do anything, and Nixon later thought it would "injure" the nation to make an issue of the outcome. Goldwater is crisp about this shrinking from confrontation. "The sanctity of the ballot," he says, "should take first consideration."

Although some stories surfaced in the media about this great theft of the presidency by political adventurers, the majority of the nation was inundated with media triumph over the defeat of the hated Nixon. In the Senate, aware that Kennedy had deliberately and knowingly misrepresented the strength of the nation's military versus the U.S.S.R., Goldwater watched with disgust as the White House fumbled the Bay of Pigs attempt to overthrow Castro. As a senator, Goldwater was familiar with the original plan as well as with the background and rise of the Cuban dictator, who had benefited from the assistance of the *New York Times* and liberal groups throughout the U.S. and other parts of the West. During the Cuban missile crisis, Kennedy called Goldwater to the White House to learn his views. Later, said Goldwater, "This charming young man . . . lost his nerve, and conveyed to world communism its first outpost in the Western Hemisphere."

Within a fairly short time, it was clear that Goldwater would contest Kennedy for the presidency. Both men joked about it, and shared a common ability to oppose without hate. Goldwater could do that, and liked Kennedy—but he did not respect him. When Lyndon Johnson was forced—says Goldwater—to run as vice president, under a threat of having the sources of his fortune investigated, Goldwater sent him a letter he reproduced in this book. In part, it reads: "It is difficult to imagine a person like you running in a second spot to a weaker man . . ."

Until Kennedy was assassinated, Goldwater looked forward to the contest. Afterward he says, "the bullet that killed John Kennedy also destroyed whatever possibility there ever was for a Goldwater presidency." The senator, recognizing the nation's mood, decided not to run; Lyndon Johnson had inher-

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ited the mantle and would be invulnerable.

There were other reasons. Goldwater's lifestyle was private; the exposure and the pomp of the American presidency today, so dear to the hearts of Johnson and Kennedy, did not appeal to the Arizonian. Another reason was that he appreciated as did few others the immense entrenched power of a bureaucracy that had defeated Eisenhower, Kennedy, and would certainly not work harmoniously with a conservative Republican. In the final analysis, however, his real reason was practical: he knew he could not win.

The fact was that he was drafted. Clifton White, William Rusher, John Ashbrook and others had organized a movement inside the Republican Party, where Goldwater was already well known and liked. The agony of these young volunteers over the course of the nation was real, and Goldwater acceded to their entreaties. A decision was made to enter the primaries and contest the forces of Nelson Rockefeller. It is unlikely that either Goldwater or his youthful partisans realized that Rockefeller was, for all his wealth and influence, only the lead horseman in a huge army arrayed against them, armed with the power of the media, supported by every liberal-to-left group in the land.

Their first charge, based on criticisms that Goldwater had made of the *actuarial* system of the Social Security system, was that the candidate was out to strip the elderly, the sick, the destitute from the stipends they received from the government. From there, the charges went downhill, and the denunciations of Goldwater sank to levels never before known against a presidential candidate in the United States. Not even Lincoln, not even Wilson in defeat, not even Jefferson or Jackson ever received such a press. Goldwater was accused of fanaticism, of seeking a nuclear war, of racism, ignorance and a malignity of purpose that made some, in such liberal-dominated sectors as New York City, wonder that so unqualified a candidate could appear at all. Even Goldwater supporters were attacked and "compared," says the senator, "to Communists and Nazis, to the Ku Klux Klan."

The culmination of this campaign came in the Cow Palace in San Francisco, where the Republican Party faithful, headed by ex-President Eisenhower, came to believe that the media of this nation were their enemies. That belief was no illusion. Goldwater, who now says ruefully that his cause was lost the night he was nominated, rose to make an acceptance speech that contained a memorable sentence, based on Cicero's denunciation of Catiline. "I must remind you, Lords, Senators," said Cicero, "that extreme patriotism in the defense of freedom is no crime and let me respectfully remind you that pusillanimity in the pursuit of justice is no virtue." Goldwater's paraphrase was succinct; there was once a time when all educated Americans would have recognized both the sentiment and its source, but in 1964 such Americans were in short supply. Nelson Rockefeller immediately charged that Goldwater had risen in San Francisco to defend extremism. That rock, unerringly hurled, brought blood to the candidate from which, in the course of the campaign, he was never again free.

The moment is worth freezing, for it marked a turn in the road for all Americans. From the disastrous Goldwater campaign onward, the media would intervene to slant American politics much as the government has intervened to distort America's productivity, commerce, technology and private sectors. Goldwater himself, deeply wounded by his experience, was grateful to be able to return to private life from 1964's end until 1968.

Returned to the Senate, Goldwater had a large and important role to play in both Nixon administrations. He was high in the councils of the party when Agnew was forced to resign, and his comments on that event are both illuminating and disturbing. Senator Goldwater is a friend of Gerald Ford's, and his comment on Ford's pardon for Nixon is terse. "The lynch mob had the noose around the neck of the man they hated," he says, "and Ford stopped the hanging. It was an act of courage which should have endeared him to every citizen who loves the Republic. It didn't."

Had Ford not intervened, says the senator, a "Roman holiday" would have ensued around Nixon, and "it would have made Ford unbeatable." That judgment, as clear and frank as possible, is very hard to fault. In fact, Barry Morris Goldwater by this book, but even more by his life and actions, his positions and presentations, proves himself a great man. It is our sorrow that he rose among us at a time when greatness generates jealousy and hatred. These may well be, as Goldwater makes clear, the final days of the Republic. He devotes the last sections of his autobiography to an analysis of the forces and groups which would like to destroy the United States. Nothing from that section will be quoted in this review, for it is the duty of citizens concerned about our nation to read it for themselves.

In the course of this exercise, they should also read the preceding parts of this book, which is one of the most important historical documents of our time. Like a live grenade, it explodes a great deal of nonsense, evil-doing and hypocrisy. It also—and for this Goldwater deserves all our gratitude—manages to exude health, sanity and even optimism. He is sure we can retain our freedom, but to learn why he is so sure, you must obtain a copy for yourself. □

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A Wistful Warning

Eve Babitz: *Sex and Rage;* Alfred A. Knopf; New York.

by Becki Klute

A glance at the title might make one expect another women's-lib tract—not so. To look just a little further, the dust-jacket description, for instance, could give the impression that it is a paean to the Beautiful People's counterculture. There will, of course, be a multitude of libcult folks who ignore anything other than that which they can interpret as praise of their glittering peculiarities, and who will laud Ms. Babitz for what they *think* she has written. But most of those libcult folks have a sort of myopia which no ophthamologist could ever cure; they interpret anything which does not clearly condemn as praise—subtleties escape minds submerged in drugs and Warholesque philosophy.

Ms. Babitz has taken a long, hard look at the Beautiful People—and she doesn't like what she sees. She admits the superficial attractiveness of the BP lifestyle (this is what the libcultists will call praise), but as she probes beneath its surface she finds some rather ugly things.

Like most girls out of high school during the 60's her heroine, Jacaranda, is looking for adventure. She is pretty, she is young, she is an avid California surfer. She is definitely a "young lady eager for a good time." What could be more natural than for such a girl to become involved with an older, married man, an actor? A doorway opens, and Jacaranda strolls heedlessly through it to a world of actors, rock stars and drug dealers, all of whom are unveiled in all their shallow selfishness.

But Ms. Babitz reserves her most biting irony for the jet-set Beautiful People. The BP float through life in amorphous circles held together by euphoric camaraderie. Jacaranda privately christens the clique of her new friends "the barge." The allusion to the notorious Egyptian queen is obvious, but remember too that a barge is also a large, unwieldy boat with no power of its own — it must always be pulled along by something else. Despite whatever surface beauty it may possess, it is essentially helpless, useless without assistance. The power that propels this particular barge is Etienne, the ultimate personification of libcult cynicism. The BP lifestyle, of course, requires money, lots of it, which someone must provide. Etienne, the provider, is an astute businessman whose main ambition is "to take over the world." Clearly then, Etienne cannot go through life befuddled with drugs and booze. He simply peoples his barge with whoever amuses him, and what amuses him most is watching people destroy themselves. The ego of the power behind the BP is thus massaged by the pathetic sight of burned-out hangers-on:

> "It was as though the more pasty-faced and impossible she became with each passing month, the more it pleased him watching her drunkenly delude herself that she was sailing along . . . There was something in Etienne that made him sympathetic to self-destruction of all kinds, for he would have gladly blown himself to smithereens for fun . . . "

Finally perceiving this cynicism, Jacaranda "jumps off the barge," and gropes her way toward reality. Somewhere along the way, she begins to write—and it sells. Her writing becomes a sort of life line, barely strong enough to keep her afloat in the treacherous tides of alcoholism. Jumping off the barge proved easier than shedding the habits she had acquired during her stay on it. Oddly, Ms. Babitz seems to see alcohol as a greater threat than drugs. Although both are destructive, she sees booze as actually the more dangerous, perhaps because of its apparent innocuousness. She makes it clear that they both provide the same thing—escape: alcohol is simply slower and only a little less dangerous. Through her alcoholic haze, Jacaranda understands that for her writing to progress she must visit her agent in New York, and the thought terrifies her. But she senses that survival lies in that direction. It takes a simple girl, sometimes considered simple-minded, to thrust Jacaranda back into reality. Through their own fears and confusion about life, each girl sets the feet of the other on the road back to normalcy.

Once in New York, terrified but not drinking, Jacaranda begins to look and feel better and better, despite the occasional martini that tiptoes across her brain. The world of publishing looks mostly sane, appealing, far removed from the barge. She calls an old friend who has "made it"—his picture is on the cover of *People*—and runs smack into Etienne and the barge. As she resists their peculiar magnetism, one wants to applaud; but a till-now normal friend of Jacaranda's can be seen being pulled irresistibly into their "magic" circle, and one wants to weep. The vicious cycle is beginning afresh; only the victim is new.

Sex and Rage could be contrasted to Jacqueline Susann's *Valley of the Dolls,* which had a similar premise of innocents drawn into a seemingly fabulous world, only to find it artificial and ultimately degrading. But where Susann wrote to titillate, Babitz writes to warn. Susann's "isn't-this-exciting" attitude is almost

"... pretentious schmaltz. *Sex and Rage* is a cheat all the way ..."
—*Village Voice*

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worshipful; Babitz's view, especially toward the end, seems almost wistful. It's as if she's disappointed that what seemed so lovely turned out to be so foul: "It will never be the same again." It's an echo of what every adult feels when bidding goodbye, sometimes reluctantly, to childhood; even the worst aspects are tinged with the rosy glow of innocence, now lost—and one knows that reality will never be quite as perfect or quite as easy as those childish illusions.

Subtitled "Advice to Young Ladies Eager for a Good Time," Babitz's message is clear, her portraits stark. She makes a good case for normalcy, for love and self-discipline rather than "sex and rage." Let's hope it comes out in paperback: all the young ladies to whom Ms. Babitz speaks will undoubtedly buy it, caught by the title, and perhaps a few lives will turn toward the nourishment of sanity instead of the glamour of lunacy. □

Prophylactics as Medium and Message

Marge Piercy: *Vida;* Summit Books; New York.

by Gary S. Vasilash

In the fall of 1969 the Rolling Stones performed in Detroit's Olympia sports arena. The crowd was standing room only, composed of a broad section of the area's youth: rock-concert ticket prices had yet to hit the current extraordinary rate—which is still eagerly paid. (It's interesting to speculate on how these same people react to the increases in gasoline prices: how many papers are being written for composition classes that flay the money-grubbing oil companies?) The final number of the evening was "Street Fighting Man," the lyrics of which are a defiant lament (an admitted oxymoron) about how there is nothing for a "poor boy" to do but to become a rock singer because "in a sleepy Detroit town, there's just no place for a street-fighting man."

As Mick Jagger, the group's multimillion-dollar poor boy, bleated out those last words, he began to dance across the stage, showering the crowd with red rose petals, which were held in a construction-worker's helmet, popular demonstration attire. At the same time, flyers fell on the crowd. The message, conveyed in a graphic shriek with the obligatory clenched-fist design, was for the youngsters to become street fighters in the cause of the Weathermen, the militant offshoot of the Students for a Democratic Society. Roses and revolution. Heady stuff, that.

Since that time, much has changed. The Rolling Stones are richer, thanks to the market system that didn't go down in the blazes of a street-fighting revolution. Young people still throng to concerts, literally packing the stadiums like so many cattle, often with no prospect of a seat. But what of the pamphlet-packing renegades?

Some answers are provided by ex-Detroiter and ex-SDS member Marge Piercy in her new novel *Vida.* Instead of the SDS, we are shown SAW, Students Against the War. And the Weather Underground (the Weathermen and women on the run) is transformed into the Network. At the center of all this is Vida Asch (a.k.a., Davida Whippletree, Vinnie Rapaport, Peregrine, etc.), age 36. We see her in the present, on the lam from the authorities, and in a series of flashbacks to the period from 1967.

The first thing one notices about the so-called revolutionaries that populate the book is that they are all incredibly beautiful or handsome. Take Vida: "she looked good . . . Yes, she was looking good . . . ." That's her own opinion. An ex-admirer—one whom Vida is certain wants her body—tells her, "You were really a beautiful girl, Vida, you know that?" Her husband, Leigh Pfeiffer, thinking back says, "Girls new in the Movement that spring. You were the best looking . . . ." Another tells her, "Vida, you never age. I think you're more beautiful now . . ." than in the days of flyers and roses.

And Leigh's no slouch himself: "Sometimes she could wish he were less striking in appearance." Leigh is the "Movement's media star," which means that he is a disc jockey on a radio station (WBAD, of course) who makes documentaries on chic issues. He attracts women like a rock star, and is also the radicals' "resident gourmet and wine expert." A third important character is Joel White, 26, an Army deserter at age 19. Vida describes him as having "a small slightly puckered arrogant mouth, beautiful ivory teeth, a well-modeled flairing nose, arched brows, a perfect lightly cleft chin." The list could go on; although the book is touted as a work of political art, the characters are straight out of a gothic romance readily available at any supermarket check-out counter.

"We believe Vida . . ."

—John Leonard
New York Times

Before looking at the politics in the book, a quick sketch of the relationships of these acid-rock Jacobins is in order. Leigh is Vida's second husband. Her first, a Greek, is mentioned, just why is never made clear; a gothic romance requires a touch of the international.

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But if the first marriage is like the second, then Vasos is better off alone. Although Vida and Leigh were united in a ceremony, it seems as if they didn't want to be married, but at the same time, they did want to be. For example, reminiscing, Vida says to Leigh, "Remember how hard it was for us to break out of that box? Everybody treating us as a couple. People constantly called you 'a married man' and me 'a married woman' till we felt like we'd turned into our parents." Lest that dread feeling last too long, they do their best to hop between the sheets with just about anyone who comes their way. And since the heroine has a high degree of revolutionary political consciousness, the gender of the person doesn't matter. Neither is she middle-class squeamish: at one point "she felt as if she was in heat," and at another, her partner makes "a sound such as an animal." Among people who want to make the world a better place, such audio-thermal effects are generally considered symptoms of higher humanness.

When the book opens, Leigh tells Vida he is working on a divorce. She is shocked. After all, she has only been underground since 1970, had long relationships with both a man (a fiery, swashbuckling Irish type) and a woman (who is sensitive, artistic and takes part in some of the Network's 60-odd bombings), and talks to her husband on a pay phone at least once a month. Don't their occasional romantic rendezvous count for anything, Vida demands. But Leigh, pushing 40 and developing a pot belly, has acquired an admiring 26-year-old—and has also gotten her pregnant, although he doesn't let Vida know it. He seems to have understood where open relationships close. Vida is outraged by Leigh, but within a matter of two days she is violently in love with Joël, who is the same age as Leigh's new object of affection.

The political angle of the book is trivial and messy. The banner under which Vida Asch marches is not exactly that of Marx and Lenin, but rather Aristippus and the early Cyrenaics: the flowing silk scarf of vulgar hedonism. Not only does she seem to confuse the satisfaction of her illimitable sexual needs with social activism (the acts are graphically detailed), but there is more emphasis on food and eating in *Vida* than in anything this side of a cookbook. And the fare is not proletarian potatoes or organic oatmeal. In the first two chapters of the book she consumes: a gourmet chicken dinner accented by a Vouvray wine; a boiled lobster dinner complete with clams, Amontillado dry sherry and black bread; a French paté, Port-Salut and Camembert cheese, and a vintage Zinfandel. One must keep up one's fighting strength to bring about the decline and fall of the American empire.

But let's perform the near-impossible and overlook the tawdry sex (it would take a computer study to track Vida's couplings in the novel) and gluttony and ask the question why Vida Asch is a revolutionary and not a self-employed call girl. Blame it on President John Kennedy. Vida had been "taken in completely by Kennedy" and "believed that Jack and Bobby would do wonders for civil rights." But then Johnson took over, and "she had come to hate him as the one who showed the corporate inside of Camelot, the imperialistic dreams behind the clean-cut Harvard rhetoric . . . He had made her see how duped and silly she had been weeping at the cortege in black and white on the television in the dormitory lounge." Vida is not one to be duped, so it's full speed ahead, into the SAW. Since she's one of the more charismatic of the radicals, she rises to the top of the heap. Indeed, she even gets her photograph in *Life* magazine. We see Vida marching, organizing, attending meetings, making speeches and so on. It doesn't seem to matter much to her why she acts. Instead, it is like casual sex: a momentary flash of excitement, there is nothing deeper to be gained or realized.

When an attempt is made to rationalize the acts, the contradictions that form the base of the character that this novel upholds as a paradigm of the political person of the age are painfully obvious. Vida says, "I want a movement that changes the way people think." Six pages later, "She mistrusted all decisions lately, because stopping to think, to weigh alternatives seemed fused with cowardice. Thinking itself was suspect . . . ." The pale cast of doubt won't ever cross Vida's forehead. A prime example of the type of thinking that Miss Piercy apparently admires can be seen by noting the adverb she uses when the band of revolutionaries has been thwarted in its attempt to plant a bomb in a military induction center and must decide what to do: " 'We might as well bomb something,' Kevin said reasonably . . . ." Reasonably? If that's *reason,* then what should be considered the consequences of insanity in a world of Vidas, Kevins, et al.?

It would be tedious to go into the revolutionary actions and sexual affairs (often synonymous) that make up *Vida.* But one of the last escapades must be noted since it is timely, and since it can be taken as something of a metaphor for the novel. Joel tries to convince Vida that they must protest against nuclear-power plants. Vida initially dismisses it as "basically a bourgeois issue," but then realizing that she will lose her young man if she doesn't go along with him, she convinces herself, and goes to great lengths to convince the board of directors of the Network (note their corporate terminology).

One of the "actions" that the group performs in its antinuclear-power crusade is the littering of the Vermont and New Hampshire countryside from a stolen plane. The trash: inflated condoms with attached notes describing the dangers of radiation. Do not both the message and the medium amount to an ultimate symbol for the woman, her mind, her human values, her ideals? □

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Forbidden Tales

Martin Green: *Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire;* Basic Books; New York.

by Gordon M. Pradl

Under the covers night after night my flashlight made voyages to distant lands possible. Expectantly, my fingers rushed to turn the page as the first mate struggled to ward off a marauding band of savages. Cornered, he managed to wrestle free a spear, but then fatigue overtook me and thoughts of the adventure slowly melded into my inner dreams of consciousness.

Stories pretend to be about the past; in reality they are about the future. In revealing the themes and conflicts of earlier experiences, stories prepare us for events that are yet to come. Without some system of expectations we are helpless in facing new circumstances. Without an identity we are at the mercy of others. Stories, through their myth-making capacity, give us both a system of expectations and an identity. In our imaginative transactions with stories, we turn action into experience, and thus we learn who we are in order that we can choose who we will become.

It is the peculiar power of narrative to project us forward into new possibilities. Yet, as in other areas of our lives, authorities would tell us which stories to believe and which to discard. For to gain control of a culture's stories is to gain control over the very life of that culture.

Similarly, to understand what is really happening in the hearts and minds of a particular people we must penetrate to the core of their everyday stories, to those stories that have left the deepest impression on the ways in which that people have come to view the world. We must not simply accept the stories that the academy may deem respectable. But herein lies a real problem for modern man, whose institutions of wisdom, no longer indigenous, have served to separate high culture from low culture, especially in terms of realms of experience, rather than in terms of quality of experience. The chief result of such a split is that many of the stories which may provide the primary moving force behind a culture, say in the realm of work or the marketplace, lose their status in relation to those stories which supposedly better reflect more "civilized" traits.

As a consequence of this devaluing of the stories of the low or unrefined culture, less imaginative energy goes into their perpetuation, because the keenest minds of the time direct their performances elsewhere. The people, of course, are not deprived of their stories; rather, they are left with stories greatly diminished in imaginative insight and artistic quality. When this occurs, and we lose touch with the essences of these stories, we lose the opportunity to imaginatively work through the issues and viable futures embodied in them.

In *Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire,* a work of literary criticism which properly becomes a work of brilliant cultural criticism, Martin Green suggests that since the late 1700's the adventure tale has fallen prey to this phenomenon of cultural dualism. As a result, Green argues, we have failed to gain a crucial interior view into the direction our imperialist culture has taken, because the intellectual class for the most part has failed to participate in the creation and retelling of those adventure tales so central to our political and economic life. "Insofar as serious writers have turned away from the adventure tale, and its subject matter, the frontier and the empire, they have turned away from an essential part of modern history, and that turning away has weakened the character of their seriousness."

Beginning with Defoe, who, of course, has not exactly been neglected in literary circles owing to his seminal connection with the rise of the novel, Green traces a course to include Scott and the *Waverly* novels, Cooper and the Leatherstocking tales, and Tolstoy and *The Cossacks,* before voyaging through selected works of Mark Twain, Rudyard Kipling and Joseph Conrad. This is hardly an unknown line-up, Conrad, for one, having been recognized by F. R. Leavis as part of the great tradition in the novel, yet the perspective from which Green views their adventure tales challenges established critical assumptions.

In re-evaluating the adventure stories of these authors, Green is not seeking to offer exhaustive critical readings; rather, he wants to establish the existence of various cultural motifs so as to force critics to deal more openly with the break in 18th-century Britain (and consequently in other Western nations) between the exterior sensibility directly responding to the challenges of empire with its question of economic expansion and the subjugation of primitive peoples and the sensibility which turned inward toward matters of human relations and states of being. In the first instance, the literary expression of cultural issues gave rise to the vigorous tales of adventure, though frequently, as in the case of Scott, these tales were cloaked in the trappings of romance; in the second instance, the domestic novel of manners was born. Thus occurred a fundamental split between the stories of the brothers and the stories of the sisters, both traditions ironically being fathered by Defoe, which is clearly evident when *Robinson Crusoe* is contrasted with his *Religious Courtship* and *The Family.* On the one side, literature boldly explored the kinds of character

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and deeds necessary for heroes who would conquer the globe, spreading the superficial marks of British culture before them; on the other, literature was content to contemplate the nature of human emotion close at home by the safe confines of the fireside.

Each of these realms of experience can clearly profit from the scrutinizing imagination of the man of letters, yet unfortunately only the domestic story of the sister became respectable for the serious novelist. The brother's tale was relegated to the area of low entertainment, adventure not being considered a worthy subject for fiction. And the academy in typically pious fashion reinforced this judgment—wishing to avoid the moral ambiguities involved in action and empire. Thus, no really brilliant man of letters came forward to intimately explore from the inside the dramatic moral tensions facing the man of empire.

Professor Green's campaign here is not, of course, to legitimize empire; rather, he wishes to explore the sensibility that led to empire so as to reintegrate our literary understanding of its underlying motives with our factual knowledge of its physical accomplishments. The adventure story, he tells us, is a key economic and political artifact for understanding the rise of Britain and subsequently America because it embodied the values of the modern world system and thus helped to forge the myth and ideology which moved men into action in the interests of the expanding merchant class. As Green describes it:

> "The system developed an ideology in which freedom and morality were the main values; freedom and morality in religion meaning Protestantism; in commerce meaning capitalist enterprise; in politics meaning a gentry republic or constitutional monarchy. This ideology was anti-imperialist; the system worked by means unlike those of the old military, centralized, tax-gathering empires, their towering structures crowned by some divinized emperor who blazed forth glory. The new empire was, or felt like, a community of freely competing equals, and called itself a nonempire to draw attention to that difference. Its means and values flourished in the core states, and their gospel was taken to the periphery and beyond, in all confidence that they could take root there, by an act of will. When they did not take root, that was attributed to a failure of will."

Within this system were competing castes. The course of empire and of the adventure story meant the triumph of the values of the merchant caste over those of the military caste, yet the price of this victory was the hidden dependence of the merchant on the soldier, an uneasy alliance that remains to this day.

Within this economic and political framework, Green provides a genre analysis of the adventure story based on the approaches of the French structuralist critics. The obvious elements of this genre fail to surprise us: a series of events in settings removed from a domestic civilized environment; a challenge to the central character or hero who successfully meets all odds displaying the virtues of courage, fortitude, cunning and strength; a showplace for the tools and techniques of the modern world system. All this cooked up to recruit the young into their own possible daring deeds to expand the empire, or at least to serve as propaganda for emigration. But beneath this simple façade lie the very complex and contradictory motives that are still with us.

The paradox of capitalist adventure is best captured in the image of the Puritan who, in dedicating himself to the religious life, learned the ways of disciplined time and space which in turn held the keys to greater worldly power and success. And so we witness the ongoing display of values and goods being turned into their opposites. The trade in textiles supported the trade in intoxicants and explosives. The primitive savage was granted salvation only to be debased into a state of servitude. In making the world safe for civilization men had to go off alone and abandon civilization. And in the process the merchant ends up sounding like a pirate, speaking for similar rapacious values. In making possessions central to life, men learned a new emotion, the anxiety of security.

These gross excesses, which undercut the manifest virtues and successes of the modern world system, were responsible for the rejection of the adventure tale in respectable literary circles and the consequent inward turn of narrative characteristic of the stories of the sisters. As Green traces this irreparable breach:

> "The serious writers, reacting against what they hated in their civilization, could indirectly attack it in the courtship novel, while more clearly asserting the caste values they shared with their audience. They created a literature of largely silent resistance. The adventure novel, on the other hand, did not protest. This is the source of the distinction, serious vs. nonserious: though of course individual writers had to give a literary validity to the distinction, by the imaginative effort they put into the domestic novel."

The issues of empire, of course, would not go away. Yet the culture's capacity to deal with them constructively was greatly weakened when the adventure narrative was left in the hands of the second-rate writer.

The tension between these two worlds begun as early as the rivalry between Defoe and Swift. Defoe, for one, participated in the affairs of the marketplace; he was a man of his times, able to rebound from bankruptcy, loyal to the king, and a staunch supporter of "England-as-a-whole." But despite his talents, unlike Swift, Defoe was a journalist, not a man of letters. For Swift stood apart, an overseeing commentator on the rush of folly below. Yet, ironically, in the battle between these antag-

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onistic points of view, it was the common reader who ruled in favor of Defoe: *Gulliver* was not read in terms of its real intent and so the *Robinson Crusoe* perspective prevailed, fanning the flames of empire in the popular imagination. It is Defoe, however, who is banned from the realms of high culture as the landed gentry, represented in the personage of Dean Swift, was not about to offer any discretionary privileges to a spokesman for the rising merchant class.

Of the other writers Green discusses, Tolstoy and Kipling present the most striking paradoxes for the establishment critic. In *The Cossacks,* Tolstoy embodied the life force of the military caste that stood apart from the centers of civilization. Viewed from inside, the Cossacks were wild, unruly and free; viewed from the outside, they were enforcers of political discipline, the counterpart of the American frontiersman, who was the actual vehicle for western expansion, the lawless tamer of the Indian and his lands. The sensibility of Tolstoy's adventure stories, however, is not easily dismissed because he went on to write serious literature of the highest order. This should then point the reader in the direction of the energy and the issues that provoked Tolstoy's imagination. Surely in a world of empire building, the brother's concerns must also be seriously addressed by the writer, and seriously considered by the literary critic.

Kipling, on the other hand, is for the most part dismissed by the academy as an unsubtle propagandist for the white man's burden. Therefore his influence lingers powerfully in the area of children's literature where, ironically, it might have the greatest effect on the real course of culture—as testified to by the large number of men of action in this century who read and were moved by Kipling's stories in their youth. Kipling, of course, was a supreme craftsman, but more than that he was able to capture the particular experiences that made up the lives of those holding the responsibility for the extension and maintenance of the British Empire.

Stalky & Co., an unrecognized classic, shows Kipling at his complex best exploring the nature of the antagonism between youth and age in a military-school setting. In this story, Kipling raises the fundamental question for the brothers: how can individual initiative and independent judgment be developed in the face of the necessary but tyrannical official rules of the organization? The rebellious characters of Stalky and his two cohorts hardly fit the mold of the docile, disciplined, order-following life portrayed in a 19th-century book of manners, for Stalky is a modern Cossack. He excites the possibilities of our own power in the face of authorities that would grind us into submission.

And so the cool reception accorded Professor Green's book must come as no surprise. In legitimizing the adventure tale, which has always stretched the boundaries of present existence, Green has implicitly passed judgment on the academy for functioning as the exclusive bastion of the domestic novel. But although this means the continuing impoverishment of the people's stories, perhaps, ironically, it is best. Once turned over to the critical establishment, the secret power of the forbidden tale might be lost forever. □

A Cowboy in a Sex Utopia

Jerzy Kosinski: *Passion Play;* St. Martin's Press; New York.

by Lev Navrozov

Like William Styron's *Sophie's Choice,* or Irwin Shaw's *The Top of the Hill,* Jerzy Kosinski's *Passion Play* is pulp from beginning to end: it hardly contains a passage that could be considered literature, not a single interesting observation, thought, memory or fact. Is there anything that would distinguish Mr. Kosinski's pulp from an ocean of other pulp, such as that recently churned out by Mr. Styron or Mr. Shaw (who was once a gifted writer)? There is. Shaw, in *The Top of the Hill,* strives for a degree of verisimilitude. If his hero conquers numberless beauties, this is because he is young, irresistibly handsome, has a degree from a good university, a good salary, is "terrifically intelligent," and free with his money. This imparts an elementary degree of pulp plausibility: "Aha," says the reader, "no wonder he does so well with all those beauties." Kosinski dispenses with even this kind of plausibility: his pulp is as implausible as a television soap opera. Thus, during an altercation with a rich, important gentleman seated before an "ornate hunt table," the hero of *Passion Play,* a polo player named Fabian, "sliced off the tip of his ring finger"—to emphasize his point, so to speak—threw it on the table, and:

> ". . . his fury an anesthetic against pain, he reached out and picked the fingertip up, held it reluctantly between his thumb and forefinger."

Kosinski might recall that inside the human body there is a liquid known as blood, which he indeed mentions elsewhere, and that his hero's retrieval of the sliced-off part of his ring finger ought to be accompanied by a spurt of blood, which messes things up, and would prevent the operation from being as cool and sure as though the remnant of the hero's ring finger were a pencil stub.

Ironically, while Kosinski's inventions are as bloodless as a child's fantasies, they all seem to have been taken helter-skelter from printed or electronic matter, be it Tolstoy or pornography.

Mr. Navrozov is a frequent contributor to these pages.

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The finger slicing is, of course, an inept imitation of the well-known episode from Tolstoy's *Father Sergius.* At his birthday party in a restaurant, Fabian overturned a flaming brandy cake and caught fire:

> "His clothes ablaze, he plunged through the room, stumbling by tables of still-cheering patrons, toward a side door opening on a verandah above the gardens. He vaulted over its railing, into the lush foliage below, blindly rolling over and over on the dewy ground to put out the flames. When, dazed, he sat up, his white suit hung in charred strips, his chest and thighs showing through the scorched cloth. Fabian knew he had to do something about his burns at once."

But what did his friends and the other patrons of the restaurant do? They "applauded wildly, under the impression that the flames and Fabian were part of the entertainment. As he approached the table, Fabian met with a volley of greetings and laughter from his friends and people at nearby tables." It is difficult to imagine that the entire patronage of the restaurant, including all the waiters and all the friends of Fabian could mistake for entertainment a man who has caught fire, who is rolling over to put out the flames, and whose naked skin is badly burned and visible between charred strips of his suit. If Kosinski cannot plausibly describe an accident, how can he be expected to describe, say, human relations—even at the level of a soap opera?

I know a Soviet emigré writer who once depicted New York as a vast sexual orgy. The writer is an oldish, tired family man always worried about his health, his rent, his children and his wife. Sex, which he perceives as a nuisance detrimental to one's health, appeals to him no more than communism. He is a gifted author—his short stories describe things he knows and understands, like the squabbles, discourses and confabulations of dreary, sterile, voluble bureaucrats. But who would pay for such short stories? He has now realized that if he wants to be financially successful as a writer in the West he must "write sex," just as he "wrote communism" in the old country.

Kosinski's book is as full of sex as Soviet novels are full of communism. Hollywood wants sex pulp, and a book is *really* successful only when it is bought by Hollywood. Experience is irrelevant, it is not needed for "successful" Hollywood sex pulp. One hundred books like *Passion Play* can be written readily on the basis of European (or Russian) brothel post cards from the turn of the century, or by using several issues of *Playboy* or other such sources.

But why did he not simply scribble hard-core porn and/or Harold Robbins-type pulp? Perhaps because *Passion Play*-type pulp is safer than real pornography, and its market is no smaller than that for Harold Robbins-type pulp. Many readers want their pulp to be labeled culture. Hence, Kosinski entitled his porno-pulp *Passion Play,* an expression which belongs to medieval Christianity. His references to Cervantes and his "foreigner's English" are to provide the cultural label used to sell porno-pulp to label-conscious consumers.

Besides sex pulp, what does Hollywood want? Violence, of course, all those cowboys in the Wild West. Unfortunately, those Hollywood cowboys do not exist, and if Kosinski had devoted his novel to Hollywood fictions, critics would not be able to compare him to Tolstoy or Dostoyevsky. His label would be damaged. Therefore, Kosinski's hero is a cowboy costumed as an equestrian polo player, and his name is not Bill, but Fabian. The opportunities for Hollywood remain intact: one polo game, as described by Kosinski, is actually an equestrian one-on-one fight over a woman (of course), and properly ends with Fabian killing his rival during the game. The Hollywood actor will have only to remember to change his cowboy headgear for a polo hat.

The cowboy-polo player Fabian is an itinerant. He travels, hence Kosinski can cram into his wanderings whatever sex and violence Hollywood wants. In contrast to Irwin Shaw's hero in *The Top of the Hill,* he is old, poor, sick, plain, uneducated and, at the end, even badly dressed, but he conquers young, rich, healthy, well-educated beauties with an even greater ease and éclat than Irwin Shaw's cowboy-caballero. Kosinski's novel is a series of such conquests under various conditions: individual sex, group sex (two lesbians and Fabian; or a beauty, a horse and Fabian), and finally mass sex. As both men and women in the book are incredibly stupid, their behavior is also utterly incomprehensible.

Fabian's first conquest is the beautiful mistress of a rich, handsome polo patron. Indeed, she seduces Fabian, and Kosinski visualizes the process like a schoolboy who has seen a 25¢ striptease show: she exhibits more and more irresistible parts of her body, and finally "he [Fabian] could see the insides of her thighs"—the final stage in a schoolboy's vision of seduction.

The next day, in order to set her rich, handsome lover against Fabian, the malicious seductress tells him that it was Fabian who tried to seduce her, and that she even spent a "few minutes" next to Fabian on top of his bed, although she remained fully dressed. The rich, handsome lover believes his mistress implicitly and telephones Fabian to give him a piece of his mind. A reality in which women who spend nights with men and then try to set their husbands or lovers against their recent partners by claiming that they tried to seduce them and failed is supposed to be both

"Powerful and compelling . . ."
—*Publishers Weekly*

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superdevious and ultrasophisticated. In fact, it's a reality of dimwits immune to rational argumentation.

Fabian's last conquest is a young millionaire heiress who, supported by her patrician father, implores the old, poor, plain Fabian to marry her. Fabian refuses, but graciously agrees to spend one night with her. Between these first and last conquests Hollywood's sexual Robin Hood scores other dazzling victories, among them a schoolgirl and one suicide by hanging. The technique of the common, plain, poor old man who conquers young, beautiful girls is generously made clear. Fabian discovers that a girl named Stella is not white, but an albino black, or as Fabian puts it, a "white Negress." Evidently, Kosinski has taken this story from the pulp of the 30's, where such discoveries were the stuff of heartbreaking melodramas:

> "She glanced around, panic in her movement and eyes at the danger of someone overhearing. Her teeth locked; for a moment she was beyond speech. Then she whispered, 'Nobody knows it. Nobody. That old man just looks at me as if he knew something. He knows nothing. Nobody knows. Nobody.'"

Since Fabian is the only custodian of the unspeakably dangerous secret, Stella is now in Fabian's power even though Fabian magnanimously promises that the bloodcurdling secret will die with him:

> "Stella looked at him, her lips tremulous. Her eyes brimmed with tears. 'I don't want to be alone,' she said. 'Can I stay with you for a while?' The tears spilled over, streaking her cheeks.
>
> 'You can. But whether you stay or you don't, what I know will stay with me. Only with me,' he said, putting an arm around her."

Fabian holds his sway over Stella even after she marries, and Kosinski employs a joke which was stale and hackneyed long before he was born: Stella's husband returns unexpectedly from a business trip and catches them in bed. The only difference between Kosinski's text and this 100-year-old joke is that his text is humorless, insipid and pointless.

Kosinski's text often reads like a medical pamphlet on sexual relations. In a "mass sex scene" a "little bald man" with a "howl stifled in his toothless mouth" forces a quickie with a beautiful young stranger—and the woman is ecstatic. In the property utopias of Soviet hacks, everyone is an altruist and willing to share his property. In his sex utopia, Kosinski's infantilism has gone infinitely further than any Soviet hack in the pursuit of utopia: beautiful young women ecstatically accept the sudden sexual advances of little bald toothless old men they have never seen before.

The novel is larded with empty yet convoluted verbiage which is evidently meant to impart to the author the air of a belles-lettres philosopher à la Nabokov. But Nabokov's verbal exercises, if not always profound, were at least linguistically funny, while Kosinski's verbosity is witless and dead. Instead of saying that Fabian was afraid, he bursts into the following:

> "He could not tell whether his fear was a response of his flesh, in revolt against a threat to the dominion of character and will; or whether fear had usurped the very province of that character and will, exposing further some critical lesion in their authority."

And here is a discourse on love:

> "The two of them were now equally lovers, a habitat of flesh bound to the revelation of that flesh through each other, assenting to its mercy."

Time magazine cited (in dead earnest) Fabian's contemplation of a dead horse as an example of profound philosophy:

> "What would have happened to the horse, Fabian wondered, if, throughout its life, instead of relying on its instinct, the animal had sought support only from its skeleton?"

No wonder *Time* was fascinated.

Like Nabokov's books, *Passion Play* is written in "foreigner's English." But Nabokov's "foreigner's English" is flexible and poetic, while Kosinski's merely makes his dry platitudes clumsy, artificial, incomprehensible. "She would . . . kiss her [lesbian partner] on the mouth, the caprice of her own theatricality a license for the bluntness of the need." Not every misused English word becomes Nabokovian just because it is misused; stilted or opaque wording is not made profound or beautiful just because it is quaint, and not all artificial English is, *ipso facto,* literature or philosophy. I have a feeling Kosinski knows it. But why should he admit it? If he did, *Women's Wear Daily,* Kosinski's ultimate oracle on literature, wouldn't ask him for interviews. □

> "The noncommittal stance of officialdom is the matrix of the grassroots organizations that have proliferated at an amazing rate throughout America during the last decade. When those who bear the designated responsibilities for any segment of the population refuse to take a stand on matters of grave importance to their constituents, then conscientious citizens are forced to take matters into their own hands."
>
> —from ***Persuasion At Work***, May 1980

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The Young, the Radical and the Ugly

Michael Wolff: *White Kids;* Summit Books; New York.

Louis Filler: *Vanguards and Followers;* Nelson-Hall; Chicago.

by Edward J. Walsh

A marvelous setting into perspective is accomplished by *White Kids*—a gentle first novel—and *Vanguards and Followers*—a thorough and authoritative history of what have been called "youth movements" in America. Together they form a picture of the 1960's that is ugly and sad, and the 70's, when the seething wave of youth "consciousness" receded, revealing its mental sludge and maimed victims.

The 80's will be a decade of looking back. There has been a deluge of books that grabbed at various short-lived delusions of the 60's and beat them to death as evidence of new "lifestyles." Charles Reich's *The Greening of America* was a good example. He and his ideas are now long forgotten, succeeded by the literature of the hot-tub set, the "assertiveness" books that are still making a killing at health-food stores, and retailers of jogging suits.

It is true that these successive flood tides of brutish psychology had an impact in America, though its depth is still being assessed. The glare of inane political ideas and shabby art and literature that are the residue of the 60's and 70's confronts any serious writer who seeks earnestly to tell the truth about American life. Thus it is terribly difficult for an honest writer to write honestly these days. He must look for the truth that lasts, that has never changed, for the strength, simplicity and beauty of American idealism, scarred and obscured though it has been in recent decades by an onslaught of lies masquerading as new ideas. Indeed, one likely assumption on opening Wolff's *White Kids* is that another young writer has failed, and produced another junk-food paean to jaded denizens of the 60's culture. The title suggests kinship with the song "White Boys," featured in the 1968 Broadway musical *Hair,* that expressed more clearly than anything else the political and social grotesqueness of the "youth" movement.

It may be that Wolff set out to write something different than the subtle, elegant book he ended up with. Perhaps he originally wanted to sit in Greenwich Village and produce an account of how the average American is enjoying the Age of Aquarius. Instead, he traveled across the country—the book is only semifictional—visiting people he had known, and meeting others he had not. His first stop is his home town, not named, an old manufacturing city a bus ride from New York; one guesses Paterson, New Jersey—a community of Italians and Presbyterians. Wolff visits former friends, including the father of a local girl who was killed in a battle between terrorists and police in the fiery end of the Symbionese Liberation Army in Los Angeles. The town is a world of supermarkets and churches, schools and factories, of people who grew up there and stayed there. Not everyone, he learns, abandons the blue-collar backwaters for California and New York—though left-wing radicals and writers always do.

He goes then to San Francisco to investigate the aftermath of a horrible crime, the murder of a young woman by her brother, and encounters the people who composed their circle of friends: young, liberal, "involved" in making the social rounds of their banal lives. A twenty-year-old girl with Philadelphia Main Line roots works as a stripper; others, educated and chic, pass their days as coffee-house waitresses and bookstore clerks, or writing books. And yet Wolff puts in the mouth of the young stripper an offhand but truthful remark: "The mark of a community is whether it can adjust." This community, in its depressing way, is adjusting to the death of its friend, the rich young woman who played "Scarlett and Zelda and Jackie Bouvier." Her brother shares a cell with Tex Watson of Manson family notoriety. The illusions are dead and gone. These people are surviving, peaceably though confusedly. Wolff sadly moves on.

He moves on to the later 70's where his only caricature, Brandon, the complete narcissist, is lost, floundering amid religious fundamentalism and boring wealth. It is to Wolff's credit that he is gentle with this pitiful victim of the Me Decade, but it may be, too, that he envies Brandon his good looks, his money, his success with women. For Wolff is not a disinterested bystander, he is looking for something to write about. He leaves New York again to meet John and Margaret, newlyweds en route to Florida on their honeymoon. After the cartoon-like Brandon, there is something ineluctably genuine about John and Margaret: ordinary people ordinarily named, with an impulse to unaffected, uncalculating generosity. We *know* they are real: there is a substance and vigor in them that reminds us of others like them we have all known. And we are struck with subtle force by the realization that there are plenty of genuinely good people, unpretentious people, in our own worlds who do every day what is right and fair. It is an exhilarating discovery for Wolff, one that we suspect remains with him.

The final chapter is the best: Wolff the free-lance writer decides to investigate, of all things, talent, competence and bravery in the U.S. Army. He interviews senior officers at places that are culturally light-years from the usual world of the New York magazine writer: Fort Bragg, North Carolina, Fort Camp-

Mr. Walsh is a frequent contributor to these pages.

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bell, Kentucky and Fort Benning, Georgia. At Benning he meets Lieutenant Terhune, infantry officer, general's aide and bachelor, a status which, in the Old Army, is still a mark against him. He spends casual days with Terhune, talking about Army life, parachuting, running, taking part in war games. The camp routine of the Army in 1979 is much as it was in 1969 or 1939: dull, repetitive, exhausting, but constant, lasting. It is here that Wolff closes, having learned that life beyond Manhattan continues largely unchanged and unaffected by the tantrums of social reformers, avant-garde politicians and writers who produce boring, standardized manuscripts meant to change the world. That there is a people, a nation of profound *moral* strength that survived the mass assault of the misfits of the 60's and the misanthropes of the 70's is the lesson Wolff learns for himself.

Louis Filler's *Vanguards and Followers* is a backward glance of a different sort. He is a competent historian of American culture, and he provides a perspective on many significant, and some less than significant, nonconformists of American history. Emerson and Whitman wrote long poems about youth, and Poe was a young man when he left his imprint on literature. A host of other flamboyant figures—Charlotte Gilman, Virginia Woodhull and Hutchins Hapgood wrote of and discussed such topics as appealed to "youth" in the 1960's, and were lost in obscurity as others, equally obscure, took their places. Earlier American history, in short, is filled with people who espoused sexual liberation, carefree drug use, pornography, pacifism and violent revolution. Filler has an appropriately matter-of-fact attitude towards them since, in perspective, the majority were idle esthetes, academic scribblers or drunken journalists whose ideas never got anywhere. By the 1950's, however, things began to change. Jack Kerouac was read and idolized by millions of teen-agers, the first children of the television generation, bored at the prospect of life that offered no challenge except doing better than their parents in material terms. Older generations, at least, had the Depression and a world war to overcome. Youth in the early years of the Media Age had jitterbugging. There must be more to life than that. Events soon proved them right.

It is crucial that Filler has distinguished between "vanguards" and "followers" because, as he tells us in his history of youth movements, those at the front of the line in the protest marches could not always be considered "young" even by the most generous yardstick. In the Catholic Church, of course, the guitar Masses and height-of-fashion habits were the creations of middle-aged priests and nuns, not the young ones. The new left had Tom Hayden and Joan Baez, but Dr. Spock, the Berrigans and Rev. William S. Coffin were no spring chickens. Filler's best portraits of youth, and his saddest, are those of young people as victims. In Haight-Ashbury, at the peak of the flower-child craze, he writes that:

> "Tales were endless about the variety of people who swept in and out of the area, the numerous drugs they used, the filth which attended their labors. The indiscriminate coupling, concentrated in Hashbury, as some called it, among the educated as well as the uneducated, gave a new strength to VD and made it a notorious product of Sixties social history."

As we watched, the 60's youth movement crashed in tragedy and despair, probably on some particular day in 1973. Filler traces its development closely and perceptively, from the first stirrings of anti-Americanism of certain civil-rights activists, Stokely Carmichael and Eldridge Cleaver among them, which poured out in the hate and violence of the Black Panthers and SNCC. Vietnam, meanwhile, became a catalyst for whites, who addicted themselves to the drugs that were the glue that kept the counterculture together. As time passed, civil rights and war paled as causes, and rock festivals (Woodstock, Monterey) and riots (Chicago) gave the hippies and the radicals a common ground, and brought forth new leaders like Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin, who were more interested in promoting mass slavishness to drugs than civil dissent. The youth movement veered sharply away from rationality; while some deserted to work within the political process for Eugene McCarthy and Robert Kennedy, the true disciples of Rubin-Hoffman-Hayden gathered in Chicago in August 1968. "Yippies" allied with the SDS to tear apart the Democratic National Convention, and, simultaneously, the illusion of youthful "idealism" as the force behind the movement. The SDS was destroyed by internecine warfare as the Weathermen, with their helmets, clubs, flak jackets and Viet Cong flags took charge.

> "[*Vanguards and Followers* is] an appalling scatter of vignettes and observations basted together by the dubious premise that youth movements throughout American history are unified by virtue of being American. The writing is shallow, incoherent, sentimental and often misleading . . ."
>
> —*Nation*

Filler's research is impeccable and he reveals much that has not been noted about even this oft-told tale, such as the close links and mutual admiration between Jerry Rubin and Charles Manson. Manson, widely considered a psychotic aberration, actually moved in the same professional circles as Sharon Tate and his other victims as a pornographic film producer and scriptwriter. Dope was the common ground for Manson and those he killed; they, in fact, were indulging in various drugs when Manson's family arrived that grim night. The circle was complete. On the far left, as

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Filler tells us, it was considered "bad taste" to discuss the Manson connection. The violence continued and increased with the Weather Underground bombings of the early 70's. But the movement was crumbling.

Vanguards and Followers is most instructive in chronicling the cultural roots of the movement. Filler studies its causes and its effects asking why, of all the antisocial lurches of nearly two centuries of American mass movements, this cataclysm of youth and the not-so-youthful in the 1960's had become the most effective assault on normalcy and tradition. He blames it partly on the previous generation: war, racism and presumptuous materialism were not the doing of these well-fed children, but these factors pushed them in new directions. The masses of young people in earlier times faced only the immediate concerns of work and survival. But, he explains, this view of youth as victims leaves them without hope or alternatives. While the youth were always followers, the "vanguard" was a misshapen ideology that grew not from middle-class Babbittry, but from liberal intellectual vacuousness.

Filler suggests that society's *acquiescence* in the values and tastes of the counterculture, for the first time in history, raised it to respectability and pushed it to bizarre and deadly excesses. He reminds us that the *New York Times* panned John O'Hara's *Pal Joey* in 1941, though O'Hara had done nothing to rationalize his shabby protagonist. However:

> "In the 1960's the *Times* treated as distinguished such authors as Paul Goodman, Norman Mailer, William Burroughs, Henry Miller, and Gloria Steinem, and published articles written with uncontrolled hatred of the United States and adulation of such a figure as Jimi Hendrix, who had presumably exposed its failings."

The American counterculture of the 60's, unlike its predecessors of other periods, had the intellectuals of the establishment on its side. University presidents routinely ordered the R.O.T.C. off their campuses at the first hint of radical activity. Sociologists called for acceptance of the drug culture, and Judge Julius Hoffman of the Chicago Seven trial was scorned and ridiculed by the major press outlets. Radicals cavorted before TV cameras as the networks did their bidding. The beacons of American society, rather than condemn the worst of the counterculture, encouraged it.

Filler, unlike Wolff, is utterly bleak in his assessment; he has a keen ear for hypocrisy, and hypocrisy was nearly everywhere in public debate in those days. The "movement" was not destroyed; the fanaticism burnt itself out, but some of its worst features were absorbed without discrimination into the disheveled ethos of American life. The consequence is that we will face this battle again.

Wolff, the younger writer, is optimistic, which is as it should be. His poignant narrative is full of hope for individuals trying to live their private lives with some sense of the lessons of the past, but outliving, perhaps, the worst memories of nihilistic battles recently fought. Two serious works, these, that touch the aching question of our age, the question of spiritual survival, but leave it circumspectly unanswered. □

The Culting of America

Gita Mehta: *Karma Cola;* Simon & Schuster; New York.

by Roger W. Fontaine

Gita Mehta's *Karma Cola* is a slim volume of anecdotes—some amusing and some instructive. The theme, of course, is East meets West or rather East merges with West, hence Karma *and* Cola, hence utter confusion. On occasion the vignettes offered by Miss Mehta are neither funny nor instructive. At times the humor is plainly forced, and the reader can best detect this fact from the chapter titles. Two will suffice: "Being Hindu Means Never Having to Say You're Sorry," and "Om Is Where the Art Is." Om?

Still, this collection of short stories—photographs really—of the Euro-American expatriate community living in India during the late 1960's gives another variation on Cultures in Collision. In this case, the principal variation explains when one culture adopts and translates another culture into its own language and then proceeds to retranslate it into the original language, the native speaker is left with a garbled text and a confused message. The author has her best moments recording the speech of the expatriate American down and out in places like Delhi and Bombay. Karma is the favorite word—dare I call it a concept—and is stretched to mean anything, thus rendering it meaningless.

The cast of characters are as one would imagine in say, *Abbot and Costello Meet the Mad Guru.* Mostly they are aimless American youths looking for drugs and sex and a meaning to it all. There are many in India who, for a price, are only too happy to supply all of the above—especially the last. No surprises there, and Miss Mehta does not tell us much beyond that. And that is too bad. She, on occasion, is almost ready to tell us more, but never quite gets to it. This is even more distressing because one gathers from the writing that she has had ten years to reflect—in London where she has wisely decided to live.

I would suggest therefore some of the

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themes that do lurk in this book. And I would begin with a story of my own. Recently, the local press reported a controversy wracking the University of Maryland—an otherwise calm behemoth institution of no great distinction. The controversy involved the management of a "nonprofit" co-op lunch counter where students could go rather than the local Pizza Hut or, worse, the official student union. Remembering institutional food as I do, almost any alternative is welcome—even a nonprofit co-op.

But soft. The quarrel was not between the university and its counterculture competitor. It was between two factions within the co-op struggling for the soul of their enterprise. The issue was chocolate milk. Should it be sold? One group said yes because the customers wanted it and the sales would help their struggling little business. Others said no. Chocolate milk had *additives* thus compromising the co-op's chief doctrine: namely, only natural foods sold here. The controversy went on for months. Perhaps it still has not been resolved.

The ignorant will only laugh at what they consider so much noise from solemn assemblies. The learned will recall that in *Gulliver's Travels,* the kingdom of Lilliput was torn asunder by a similar question of profound importance, namely, whether an egg should be cracked at the small or large end. The partisans of the small end at the time of Gulliver's visit held the advantage although the issue had cost 11,000 Lilliputian lives. It is true the co-op's deliberations are not the Council of Trent or even Vatican II, but they are theological in nature. Those who favor chocolate milk sales are clearly advocating a heterodox position within the larger faith that has touched us all. (Do not, dear reader, be skeptical on this point. After all, the U.S. Department of Agriculture is seriously considering the banning of bacon.)

Admittedly, the forces favoring chocolate milk are probably in the majority at Maryland and across the country. But the orthodox are more determined. You will recall that Athanasius at the Council of Nicaea could not match his rival Arius in prestige, debating skill or size of following. Nevertheless, the less genial Athanasius ended up writing the Nicene Creed, and rode Arius out of the church and out of history.

My purpose then is to invite serious consideration of a broader problem illuminated on occasion by Miss Mehta and the recent controversy in College Park. I speak of the culting of America. This is not to be confused with single-issue constituencies, much less the evil of factions so wisely discussed by James Madison in *The Federalist,* No. 10. No. The culting of America is the tendency of our people to take any small truth, half-truth or some bit of utter nonsense and turn it into an entire way of life. It becomes philosophy and theology and the further it is from common sense and ordinary society, the better. Remember the Latin word *cultus* means care or adoration. Its old meaning dealt with the care of the gods—that is, beings outside and above their worshipers. Today's cults, including Miss Mehta's menagerie of holy men, usually reject the notion that anyone or anything is superior to them. They are reduced to the care and adoration of themselves—their bodies in particular. It is no mere coincidence that our cults often anchor their "beliefs" in the ingesting of some "sacred" substance—material ranging from peyote to granola.

Is any of this really dangerous? Or are we merely dealing with an advanced case of Me-ism? After all, if people wish to behave in a (more or less) legal but foolish manner, why should the rest of us complain? Is it not a constitutional right to behave like a jackass?

The answer is both yes and no. Yes, people can act foolishly within the law though that line is often trespassed as the recent shoot-out between Philadelphia police and a pseudo-African cult attests. But having said that, the matter does not end there. Until the early 1960's, men and women of some taste and learning had no trouble in labeling the lunatic fringe as just that—lunatic. The now-forgotten likes of Gerald L. K. Smith and Gerald Winrod were regularly pilloried for their beliefs, which ranged from the merely goofy to the genuinely malicious. But words like crackpot (the American language is singularly rich in epithets describing the nutty) disappeared from our critical vocabularies, and soon the floodgates were opened. It is no accident that the level of public discourse sank while the nonsense index soared. The First Amendment became an expression of approval for any idea, no matter how insane, rather than a law which merely granted permission to express that idea. Meanwhile, the mass media, hungry for the novel, rejoiced in the prospect of endless examples of the bizarre.

But there is more to it than mere acceptance of balderdash even when we know better. All of these cults—their absorption in their own minutiae—bear some real social costs. Political cults do the most obvious harm. From the ban-the-bombers to the back-to-nature-ists, few if any have examined the consequences of their beliefs. Does Miss Fonda really want to wash her clothes by the banks of the Los Angeles river? I doubt it. But her splendidly irrational notion about energy and from whence it comes will in time reduce all of us to similar plights. For the lesser cults, they too mean trouble. For those who do nothing but follow their "little truths" to the end, their single-mindedness means that they have little or no time to practice civic virtue—which includes everything from defending one's country to curbing the dog. For the cultists, it is the rest of us who must make it somehow work.

In time, that simply is not going to happen, and that is not an amusing prospect. Unfortunately, the consequences of *Karma Cola* await the author's second book. □

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and deeds necessary for heroes who would conquer the globe, spreading the superficial marks of British culture before them; on the other, literature was content to contemplate the nature of human emotion close at home by the safe confines of the fireside.

Each of these realms of experience can clearly profit from the scrutinizing imagination of the man of letters, yet unfortunately only the domestic story of the sister became respectable for the serious novelist. The brother's tale was relegated to the area of low entertainment, adventure not being considered a worthy subject for fiction. And the academy in typically pious fashion reinforced this judgment—wishing to avoid the moral ambiguities involved in action and empire. Thus, no really brilliant man of letters came forward to intimately explore from the inside the dramatic moral tensions facing the man of empire.

Professor Green's campaign here is not, of course, to legitimize empire; rather, he wishes to explore the sensibility that led to empire so as to reintegrate our literary understanding of its underlying motives with our factual knowledge of its physical accomplishments. The adventure story, he tells us, is a key economic and political artifact for understanding the rise of Britain and subsequently America because it embodied the values of the modern world system and thus helped to forge the myth and ideology which moved men into action in the interests of the expanding merchant class. As Green describes it:

> "The system developed an ideology in which freedom and morality were the main values; freedom and morality in religion meaning Protestantism; in commerce meaning capitalist enterprise; in politics meaning a gentry republic or constitutional monarchy. This ideology was anti-imperialist; the system worked by means unlike those of the old military, centralized, tax-gathering empires, their towering structures crowned by some divinized emperor who blazed forth glory. The new empire was, or felt like, a community of freely competing equals, and called itself a nonempire to draw attention to that difference. Its means and values flourished in the core states, and their gospel was taken to the periphery and beyond, in all confidence that they could take root there, by an act of will. When they did not take root, that was attributed to a failure of will."

Within this system were competing castes. The course of empire and of the adventure story meant the triumph of the values of the merchant caste over those of the military caste, yet the price of this victory was the hidden dependence of the merchant on the soldier, an uneasy alliance that remains to this day.

Within this economic and political framework, Green provides a genre analysis of the adventure story based on the approaches of the French structuralist critics. The obvious elements of this genre fail to surprise us: a series of events in settings removed from a domestic civilized environment; a challenge to the central character or hero who successfully meets all odds displaying the virtues of courage, fortitude, cunning and strength; a showplace for the tools and techniques of the modern world system. All this cooked up to recruit the young into their own possible daring deeds to expand the empire, or at least to serve as propaganda for emigration. But beneath this simple façade lie the very complex and contradictory motives that are still with us.

The paradox of capitalist adventure is best captured in the image of the Puritan who, in dedicating himself to the religious life, learned the ways of disciplined time and space which in turn held the keys to greater worldly power and success. And so we witness the ongoing display of values and goods being turned into their opposites. The trade in textiles supported the trade in intoxicants and explosives. The primitive savage was granted salvation only to be debased into a state of servitude. In making the world safe for civilization men had to go off alone and abandon civilization. And in the process the merchant ends up sounding like a pirate, speaking for similar rapacious values. In making possessions central to life, men learned a new emotion, the anxiety of security.

These gross excesses, which undercut the manifest virtues and successes of the modern world system, were responsible for the rejection of the adventure tale in respectable literary circles and the consequent inward turn of narrative characteristic of the stories of the sisters. As Green traces this irreparable breach:

> "The serious writers, reacting against what they hated in their civilization, could indirectly attack it in the courtship novel, while more clearly asserting the caste values they shared with their audience. They created a literature of largely silent resistance. The adventure novel, on the other hand, did not protest. This is the source of the distinction, serious vs. nonserious: though of course individual writers had to give a literary validity to the distinction, by the imaginative effort they put into the domestic novel."

The issues of empire, of course, would not go away. Yet the culture's capacity to deal with them constructively was greatly weakened when the adventure narrative was left in the hands of the second-rate writer.

The tension between these two worlds begun as early as the rivalry between Defoe and Swift. Defoe, for one, participated in the affairs of the marketplace; he was a man of his times, able to rebound from bankruptcy, loyal to the king, and a staunch supporter of "England-as-a-whole." But despite his talents, unlike Swift, Defoe was a journalist, not a man of letters. For Swift stood apart, an overseeing commentator on the rush of folly below. Yet, ironically, in the battle between these antag-

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onistic points of view, it was the common reader who ruled in favor of Defoe: *Gulliver* was not read in terms of its real intent and so the *Robinson Crusoe* perspective prevailed, fanning the flames of empire in the popular imagination. It is Defoe, however, who is banned from the realms of high culture as the landed gentry, represented in the personage of Dean Swift, was not about to offer any discretionary privileges to a spokesman for the rising merchant class.

Of the other writers Green discusses, Tolstoy and Kipling present the most striking paradoxes for the establishment critic. In *The Cossacks,* Tolstoy embodied the life force of the military caste that stood apart from the centers of civilization. Viewed from inside, the Cossacks were wild, unruly and free; viewed from the outside, they were enforcers of political discipline, the counterpart of the American frontiersman, who was the actual vehicle for western expansion, the lawless tamer of the Indian and his lands. The sensibility of Tolstoy's adventure stories, however, is not easily dismissed because he went on to write serious literature of the highest order. This should then point the reader in the direction of the energy and the issues that provoked Tolstoy's imagination. Surely in a world of empire building, the brother's concerns must also be seriously addressed by the writer, and seriously considered by the literary critic.

Kipling, on the other hand, is for the most part dismissed by the academy as an unsubtle propagandist for the white man's burden. Therefore his influence lingers powerfully in the area of children's literature where, ironically, it might have the greatest effect on the real course of culture—as testified to by the large number of men of action in this century who read and were moved by Kipling's stories in their youth. Kipling, of course, was a supreme craftsman, but more than that he was able to capture the particular experiences that made up the lives of those holding the responsibility for the extension and maintenance of the British Empire.

Stalky & Co., an unrecognized classic, shows Kipling at his complex best exploring the nature of the antagonism between youth and age in a military-school setting. In this story, Kipling raises the fundamental question for the brothers: how can individual initiative and independent judgment be developed in the face of the necessary but tyrannical official rules of the organization? The rebellious characters of Stalky and his two cohorts hardly fit the mold of the docile, disciplined, order-following life portrayed in a 19th-century book of manners, for Stalky is a modern Cossack. He excites the possibilities of our own power in the face of authorities that would grind us into submission.

And so the cool reception accorded Professor Green's book must come as no surprise. In legitimizing the adventure tale, which has always stretched the boundaries of present existence, Green has implicitly passed judgment on the academy for functioning as the exclusive bastion of the domestic novel. But although this means the continuing impoverishment of the people's stories, perhaps, ironically, it is best. Once turned over to the critical establishment, the secret power of the forbidden tale might be lost forever. □

A Cowboy in a Sex Utopia

Jerzy Kosinski: *Passion Play;* St. Martin's Press; New York.

by Lev Navrozov

Like William Styron's *Sophie's Choice,* or Irwin Shaw's *The Top of the Hill,* Jerzy Kosinski's *Passion Play* is pulp from beginning to end: it hardly contains a passage that could be considered literature, not a single interesting observation, thought, memory or fact. Is there anything that would distinguish Mr. Kosinski's pulp from an ocean of other pulp, such as that recently churned out by Mr. Styron or Mr. Shaw (who was once a gifted writer)? There is. Shaw, in *The Top of the Hill,* strives for a degree of verisimilitude. If his hero conquers numberless beauties, this is because he is young, irresistibly handsome, has a degree from a good university, a good salary, is "terrifically intelligent," and free with his money. This imparts an elementary degree of pulp plausibility: "Aha," says the reader, "no wonder he does so well with all those beauties." Kosinski dispenses with even this kind of plausibility: his pulp is as implausible as a television soap opera. Thus, during an altercation with a rich, important gentleman seated before an "ornate hunt table," the hero of *Passion Play,* a polo player named Fabian, "sliced off the tip of his ring finger"—to emphasize his point, so to speak—threw it on the table, and:

> ". . . his fury an anesthetic against pain, he reached out and picked the fingertip up, held it reluctantly between his thumb and forefinger."

Kosinski might recall that inside the human body there is a liquid known as blood, which he indeed mentions elsewhere, and that his hero's retrieval of the sliced-off part of his ring finger ought to be accompanied by a spurt of blood, which messes things up, and would prevent the operation from being as cool and sure as though the remnant of the hero's ring finger were a pencil stub.

Ironically, while Kosinski's inventions are as bloodless as a child's fantasies, they all seem to have been taken helter-skelter from printed or electronic matter, be it Tolstoy or pornography.

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The finger slicing is, of course, an inept imitation of the well-known episode from Tolstoy's *Father Sergius.* At his birthday party in a restaurant, Fabian overturned a flaming brandy cake and caught fire:

> "His clothes ablaze, he plunged through the room, stumbling by tables of still-cheering patrons, toward a side door opening on a verandah above the gardens. He vaulted over its railing, into the lush foliage below, blindly rolling over and over on the dewy ground to put out the flames. When, dazed, he sat up, his white suit hung in charred strips, his chest and thighs showing through the scorched cloth. Fabian knew he had to do something about his burns at once."

But what did his friends and the other patrons of the restaurant do? They "applauded wildly, under the impression that the flames and Fabian were part of the entertainment. As he approached the table, Fabian met with a volley of greetings and laughter from his friends and people at nearby tables." It is difficult to imagine that the entire patronage of the restaurant, including all the waiters and all the friends of Fabian could mistake for entertainment a man who has caught fire, who is rolling over to put out the flames, and whose naked skin is badly burned and visible between charred strips of his suit. If Kosinski cannot plausibly describe an accident, how can he be expected to describe, say, human relations—even at the level of a soap opera?

I know a Soviet emigré writer who once depicted New York as a vast sexual orgy. The writer is an oldish, tired family man always worried about his health, his rent, his children and his wife. Sex, which he perceives as a nuisance detrimental to one's health, appeals to him no more than communism. He is a gifted author—his short stories describe things he knows and understands, like the squabbles, discourses and confabulations of dreary, sterile, voluble bureaucrats. But who would pay for such short stories? He has now realized that if he wants to be financially successful as a writer in the West he must "write sex," just as he "wrote communism" in the old country.

Kosinski's book is as full of sex as Soviet novels are full of communism. Hollywood wants sex pulp, and a book is *really* successful only when it is bought by Hollywood. Experience is irrelevant, it is not needed for "successful" Hollywood sex pulp. One hundred books like *Passion Play* can be written readily on the basis of European (or Russian) brothel post cards from the turn of the century, or by using several issues of *Playboy* or other such sources.

But why did he not simply scribble hard-core porn and/or Harold Robbins-type pulp? Perhaps because *Passion Play*-type pulp is safer than real pornography, and its market is no smaller than that for Harold Robbins-type pulp. Many readers want their pulp to be labeled culture. Hence, Kosinski entitled his porno-pulp *Passion Play,* an expression which belongs to medieval Christianity. His references to Cervantes and his "foreigner's English" are to provide the cultural label used to sell porno-pulp to label-conscious consumers.

Besides sex pulp, what does Hollywood want? Violence, of course, all those cowboys in the Wild West. Unfortunately, those Hollywood cowboys do not exist, and if Kosinski had devoted his novel to Hollywood fictions, critics would not be able to compare him to Tolstoy or Dostoyevsky. His label would be damaged. Therefore, Kosinski's hero is a cowboy costumed as an equestrian polo player, and his name is not Bill, but Fabian. The opportunities for Hollywood remain intact: one polo game, as described by Kosinski, is actually an equestrian one-on-one fight over a woman (of course), and properly ends with Fabian killing his rival during the game. The Hollywood actor will have only to remember to change his cowboy headgear for a polo hat.

The cowboy-polo player Fabian is an itinerant. He travels, hence Kosinski can cram into his wanderings whatever sex and violence Hollywood wants. In contrast to Irwin Shaw's hero in *The Top of the Hill,* he is old, poor, sick, plain, uneducated and, at the end, even badly dressed, but he conquers young, rich, healthy, well-educated beauties with an even greater ease and éclat than Irwin Shaw's cowboy-caballero. Kosinski's novel is a series of such conquests under various conditions: individual sex, group sex (two lesbians and Fabian; or a beauty, a horse and Fabian), and finally mass sex. As both men and women in the book are incredibly stupid, their behavior is also utterly incomprehensible.

Fabian's first conquest is the beautiful mistress of a rich, handsome polo patron. Indeed, she seduces Fabian, and Kosinski visualizes the process like a schoolboy who has seen a 25¢ striptease show: she exhibits more and more irresistible parts of her body, and finally "he [Fabian] could see the insides of her thighs"—the final stage in a schoolboy's vision of seduction.

"Powerful and compelling . . ."
—*Publishers Weekly*

The next day, in order to set her rich, handsome lover against Fabian, the malicious seductress tells him that it was Fabian who tried to seduce her, and that she even spent a "few minutes" next to Fabian on top of his bed, although she remained fully dressed. The rich, handsome lover believes his mistress implicitly and telephones Fabian to give him a piece of his mind. A reality in which women who spend nights with men and then try to set their husbands or lovers against their recent partners by claiming that they tried to seduce them and failed is supposed to be both

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superdevious and ultrasophisticated. In fact, it's a reality of dimwits immune to rational argumentation.

Fabian's last conquest is a young millionaire heiress who, supported by her patrician father, implores the old, poor, plain Fabian to marry her. Fabian refuses, but graciously agrees to spend one night with her. Between these first and last conquests Hollywood's sexual Robin Hood scores other dazzling victories, among them a schoolgirl and one suicide by hanging. The technique of the common, plain, poor old man who conquers young, beautiful girls is generously made clear. Fabian discovers that a girl named Stella is not white, but an albino black, or as Fabian puts it, a "white Negress." Evidently, Kosinski has taken this story from the pulp of the 30's, where such discoveries were the stuff of heartbreaking melodramas:

> "She glanced around, panic in her movement and eyes at the danger of someone overhearing. Her teeth locked; for a moment she was beyond speech. Then she whispered, 'Nobody knows it. Nobody. That old man just looks at me as if he knew something. He knows nothing. Nobody knows. Nobody.' "

Since Fabian is the only custodian of the unspeakably dangerous secret, Stella is now in Fabian's power even though Fabian magnanimously promises that the bloodcurdling secret will die with him:

> "Stella looked at him, her lips tremulous. Her eyes brimmed with tears. 'I don't want to be alone,' she said. 'Can I stay with you for a while?' The tears spilled over, streaking her cheeks.
>
> 'You can. But whether you stay or you don't, what I know will stay with me. Only with me,' he said, putting an arm around her."

Fabian holds his sway over Stella even after she marries, and Kosinski employs a joke which was stale and hackneyed long before he was born: Stella's husband returns unexpectedly from a business trip and catches them in bed. The only difference between Kosinski's text and this 100-year-old joke is that his text is humorless, insipid and pointless.

Kosinski's text often reads like a medical pamphlet on sexual relations. In a "mass sex scene" a "little bald man" with a "howl stifled in his toothless mouth" forces a quickie with a beautiful young stranger—and the woman is ecstatic. In the property utopias of Soviet hacks, everyone is an altruist and willing to share his property. In his sex utopia, Kosinski's infantilism has gone infinitely further than any Soviet hack in the pursuit of utopia: beautiful young women ecstatically accept the sudden sexual advances of little bald toothless old men they have never seen before.

The novel is larded with empty yet convoluted verbiage which is evidently meant to impart to the author the air of a belles-lettres philosopher à la Nabokov. But Nabokov's verbal exercises, if not always profound, were at least linguistically funny, while Kosinski's verbosity is witless and dead. Instead of saying that Fabian was afraid, he bursts into the following:

> "He could not tell whether his fear was a response of his flesh, in revolt against a threat to the dominion of character and will; or whether fear had usurped the very province of that character and will, exposing further some critical lesion in their authority."

And here is a discourse on love:

> "The two of them were now equally lovers, a habitat of flesh bound to the revelation of that flesh through each other, assenting to its mercy."

Time magazine cited (in dead earnest) Fabian's contemplation of a dead horse as an example of profound philosophy:

> "What would have happened to the horse, Fabian wondered, if, throughout its life, instead of relying on its instinct, the animal had sought support only from its skeleton?"

No wonder *Time* was fascinated.

Like Nabokov's books, *Passion Play* is written in "foreigner's English." But Nabokov's "foreigner's English" is flexible and poetic, while Kosinski's merely makes his dry platitudes clumsy, artificial, incomprehensible. "She would . . . kiss her [lesbian partner] on the mouth, the caprice of her own theatricality a license for the bluntness of the need." Not every misused English word becomes Nabokovian just because it is misused; stilted or opaque wording is not made profound or beautiful just because it is quaint, and not all artificial English is, *ipso facto,* literature or philosophy. I have a feeling Kosinski knows it. But why should he admit it? If he did, *Women's Wear Daily,* Kosinski's ultimate oracle on literature, wouldn't ask him for interviews. □

"The noncommittal stance of officialdom is the matrix of the grassroots organizations that have proliferated at an amazing rate throughout America during the last decade. When those who bear the designated responsibilities for any segment of the population refuse to take a stand on matters of grave importance to their constituents, then conscientious citizens are forced to take matters into their own hands."

—from ***Persuasion At Work***, May 1980

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The Young, the Radical and the Ugly

Michael Wolff: *White Kids;* Summit Books; New York.

Louis Filler: *Vanguards and Followers;* Nelson-Hall; Chicago.

by Edward J. Walsh

A marvelous setting into perspective is accomplished by *White Kids*—a gentle first novel—and *Vanguards and Followers*—a thorough and authoritative history of what have been called "youth movements" in America. Together they form a picture of the 1960's that is ugly and sad, and the 70's, when the seething wave of youth "consciousness" receded, revealing its mental sludge and maimed victims.

The 80's will be a decade of looking back. There has been a deluge of books that grabbed at various short-lived delusions of the 60's and beat them to death as evidence of new "lifestyles." Charles Reich's *The Greening of America* was a good example. He and his ideas are now long forgotten, succeeded by the literature of the hot-tub set, the "assertiveness" books that are still making a killing at health-food stores, and retailers of jogging suits.

It is true that these successive flood tides of brutish psychology had an impact in America, though its depth is still being assessed. The glare of inane political ideas and shabby art and literature that are the residue of the 60's and 70's confronts any serious writer who seeks earnestly to tell the truth about American life. Thus it is terribly difficult for an honest writer to write honestly these days. He must look for the truth that lasts, that has never changed, for the strength, simplicity and beauty of American idealism, scarred and obscured though it has been in recent decades by an onslaught of lies masquerading as new ideas. Indeed, one likely assumption on opening Wolff's *White Kids* is that another young writer has failed, and produced another junk-food paean to jaded denizens of the 60's culture. The title suggests kinship with the song "White Boys," featured in the 1968 Broadway musical *Hair,* that expressed more clearly than anything else the political and social grotesqueness of the "youth" movement.

Mr. Walsh is a frequent contributor to these pages.

It may be that Wolff set out to write something different than the subtle, elegant book he ended up with. Perhaps he originally wanted to sit in Greenwich Village and produce an account of how the average American is enjoying the Age of Aquarius. Instead, he traveled across the country—the book is only semifictional—visiting people he had known, and meeting others he had not. His first stop is his home town, not named, an old manufacturing city a bus ride from New York; one guesses Paterson, New Jersey—a community of Italians and Presbyterians. Wolff visits former friends, including the father of a local girl who was killed in a battle between terrorists and police in the fiery end of the Symbionese Liberation Army in Los Angeles. The town is a world of supermarkets and churches, schools and factories, of people who grew up there and stayed there. Not everyone, he learns, abandons the blue-collar backwaters for California and New York—though left-wing radicals and writers always do.

He goes then to San Francisco to investigate the aftermath of a horrible crime, the murder of a young woman by her brother, and encounters the people who composed their circle of friends: young, liberal, "involved" in making the social rounds of their banal lives. A twenty-year-old girl with Philadelphia Main Line roots works as a stripper; others, educated and chic, pass their days as coffee-house waitresses and bookstore clerks, or writing books. And yet Wolff puts in the mouth of the young stripper an offhand but truthful remark: "The mark of a community is whether it can adjust." This community, in its depressing way, is adjusting to the death of its friend, the rich young woman who played "Scarlett and Zelda and Jackie Bouvier." Her brother shares a cell with Tex Watson of Manson family notoriety. The illusions are dead and gone. These people are surviving, peaceably though confusedly. Wolff sadly moves on.

He moves on to the later 70's where his only caricature, Brandon, the complete narcissist, is lost, floundering amid religious fundamentalism and boring wealth. It is to Wolff's credit that he is gentle with this pitiful victim of the Me Decade, but it may be, too, that he envies Brandon his good looks, his money, his success with women. For Wolff is not a disinterested bystander, he is looking for something to write about. He leaves New York again to meet John and Margaret, newlyweds en route to Florida on their honeymoon. After the cartoon-like Brandon, there is something ineluctably genuine about John and Margaret: ordinary people ordinarily named, with an impulse to unaffected, uncalculating generosity. We *know* they are real: there is a substance and vigor in them that reminds us of others like them we have all known. And we are struck with subtle force by the realization that there are plenty of genuinely good people, unpretentious people, in our own worlds who do every day what is right and fair. It is an exhilarating discovery for Wolff, one that we suspect remains with him.

The final chapter is the best: Wolff the free-lance writer decides to investigate, of all things, talent, competence and bravery in the U.S. Army. He interviews senior officers at places that are culturally light-years from the usual world of the New York magazine writer: Fort Bragg, North Carolina, Fort Camp-

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bell, Kentucky and Fort Benning, Georgia. At Benning he meets Lieutenant Terhune, infantry officer, general's aide and bachelor, a status which, in the Old Army, is still a mark against him. He spends casual days with Terhune, talking about Army life, parachuting, running, taking part in war games. The camp routine of the Army in 1979 is much as it was in 1969 or 1939: dull, repetitive, exhausting, but constant, lasting. It is here that Wolff closes, having learned that life beyond Manhattan continues largely unchanged and unaffected by the tantrums of social reformers, avant-garde politicians and writers who produce boring, standardized manuscripts meant to change the world. That there is a people, a nation of profound *moral* strength that survived the mass assault of the misfits of the 60's and the misanthropes of the 70's is the lesson Wolff learns for himself.

Louis Filler's *Vanguards and Followers* is a backward glance of a different sort. He is a competent historian of American culture, and he provides a perspective on many significant, and some less than significant, nonconformists of American history. Emerson and Whitman wrote long poems about youth, and Poe was a young man when he left his imprint on literature. A host of other flamboyant figures—Charlotte Gilman, Virginia Woodhull and Hutchins Hapgood wrote of and discussed such topics as appealed to "youth" in the 1960's, and were lost in obscurity as others, equally obscure, took their places. Earlier American history, in short, is filled with people who espoused sexual liberation, carefree drug use, pornography, pacifism and violent revolution. Filler has an appropriately matter-of-fact attitude towards them since, in perspective, the majority were idle esthetes, academic scribblers or drunken journalists whose ideas never got anywhere. By the 1950's, however, things began to change. Jack Kerouac was read and idolized by millions of teen-agers, the first children of the television generation, bored at the prospect of life that offered no challenge except doing better than their parents in material terms. Older generations, at least, had the Depression and a world war to overcome. Youth in the early years of the Media Age had jitterbugging. There must be more to life than that. Events soon proved them right.

It is crucial that Filler has distinguished between "vanguards" and "followers" because, as he tells us in his history of youth movements, those at the front of the line in the protest marches could not always be considered "young" even by the most generous yardstick. In the Catholic Church, of course, the guitar Masses and height-of-fashion habits were the creations of middle-aged priests and nuns, not the young ones. The new left had Tom Hayden and Joan Baez, but Dr. Spock, the Berrigans and Rev. William S. Coffin were no spring chickens. Filler's best portraits of youth, and his saddest, are those of young people as victims. In Haight-Ashbury, at the peak of the flower-child craze, he writes that:

> "Tales were endless about the variety of people who swept in and out of the area, the numerous drugs they used, the filth which attended their labors. The indiscriminate coupling, concentrated in Hashbury, as some called it, among the educated as well as the uneducated, gave a new strength to VD and made it a notorious product of Sixties social history."

As we watched, the 60's youth movement crashed in tragedy and despair, probably on some particular day in 1973. Filler traces its development closely and perceptively, from the first stirrings of anti-Americanism of certain civil-rights activists, Stokely Carmichael and Eldridge Cleaver among them, which poured out in the hate and violence of the Black Panthers and SNCC. Vietnam, meanwhile, became a catalyst for whites, who addicted themselves to the drugs that were the glue that kept the counterculture together. As time passed, civil rights and war paled as causes, and rock festivals (Woodstock, Monterey) and riots (Chicago) gave the hippies and the radicals a common ground, and brought forth new leaders like Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin, who were more interested in promoting mass slavishness to drugs than civil dissent. The youth movement veered sharply away from rationality; while some deserted to work within the political process for Eugene McCarthy and Robert Kennedy, the true disciples of Rubin-Hoffman-Hayden gathered in Chicago in August 1968. "Yippies" allied with the SDS to tear apart the Democratic National Convention, and, simultaneously, the illusion of youthful "idealism" as the force behind the movement. The SDS was destroyed by internecine warfare as the Weathermen, with their helmets, clubs, flak jackets and Viet Cong flags took charge.

> "[*Vanguards and Followers* is] an appalling scatter of vignettes and observations basted together by the dubious premise that youth movements throughout American history are unified by virtue of being American. The writing is shallow, incoherent, sentimental and often misleading . . ."
>
> —*Nation*

Filler's research is impeccable and he reveals much that has not been noted about even this oft-told tale, such as the close links and mutual admiration between Jerry Rubin and Charles Manson. Manson, widely considered a psychotic aberration, actually moved in the same professional circles as Sharon Tate and his other victims as a pornographic film producer and scriptwriter. Dope was the common ground for Manson and those he killed; they, in fact, were indulging in various drugs when Manson's family arrived that grim night. The circle was complete. On the far left, as

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Filler tells us, it was considered "bad taste" to discuss the Manson connection. The violence continued and increased with the Weather Underground bombings of the early 70's. But the movement was crumbling.

Vanguards and Followers is most instructive in chronicling the cultural roots of the movement. Filler studies its causes and its effects asking why, of all the antisocial lurches of nearly two centuries of American mass movements, this cataclysm of youth and the not-so-youthful in the 1960's had become the most effective assault on normalcy and tradition. He blames it partly on the previous generation: war, racism and presumptuous materialism were not the doing of these well-fed children, but these factors pushed them in new directions. The masses of young people in earlier times faced only the immediate concerns of work and survival. But, he explains, this view of youth as victims leaves them without hope or alternatives. While the youth were always followers, the "vanguard" was a misshapen ideology that grew not from middle-class Babbittry, but from liberal intellectual vacuousness.

Filler suggests that society's *acquiescence* in the values and tastes of the counterculture, for the first time in history, raised it to respectability and pushed it to bizarre and deadly excesses. He reminds us that the *New York Times* panned John O'Hara's *Pal Joey* in 1941, though O'Hara had done nothing to rationalize his shabby protagonist. However:

> "In the 1960's the *Times* treated as distinguished such authors as Paul Goodman, Norman Mailer, William Burroughs, Henry Miller, and Gloria Steinem, and published articles written with uncontrolled hatred of the United States and adulation of such a figure as Jimi Hendrix, who had presumably exposed its failings."

The American counterculture of the 60's, unlike its predecessors of other periods, had the intellectuals of the establishment on its side. University presidents routinely ordered the R.O.T.C. off their campuses at the first hint of radical activity. Sociologists called for acceptance of the drug culture, and Judge Julius Hoffman of the Chicago Seven trial was scorned and ridiculed by the major press outlets. Radicals cavorted before TV cameras as the networks did their bidding. The beacons of American society, rather than condemn the worst of the counterculture, encouraged it.

Filler, unlike Wolff, is utterly bleak in his assessment; he has a keen ear for hypocrisy, and hypocrisy was nearly everywhere in public debate in those days. The "movement" was not destroyed; the fanaticism burnt itself out, but some of its worst features were absorbed without discrimination into the disheveled ethos of American life. The consequence is that we will face this battle again.

Wolff, the younger writer, is optimistic, which is as it should be. His poignant narrative is full of hope for individuals trying to live their private lives with some sense of the lessons of the past, but outliving, perhaps, the worst memories of nihilistic battles recently fought. Two serious works, these, that touch the aching question of our age, the question of spiritual survival, but leave it circumspectly unanswered. □

The Culting of America

Gita Mehta: *Karma Cola;* Simon & Schuster; New York.

by Roger W. Fontaine

Gita Mehta's *Karma Cola* is a slim volume of anecdotes—some amusing and some instructive. The theme, of course, is East meets West or rather East merges with West, hence Karma *and* Cola, hence utter confusion. On occasion the vignettes offered by Miss Mehta are neither funny nor instructive. At times the humor is plainly forced, and the reader can best detect this fact from the chapter titles. Two will suffice: "Being Hindu Means Never Having to Say You're Sorry," and "Om Is Where the Art Is." Om?

Still, this collection of short stories—photographs really—of the Euro-American expatriate community living in India during the late 1960's gives another variation on Cultures in Collision. In this case, the principal variation explains when one culture adopts and translates another culture into its own language and then proceeds to retranslate it into the original language, the native speaker is left with a garbled text and a confused message. The author has her best moments recording the speech of the expatriate American down and out in places like Delhi and Bombay. Karma is the favorite word—dare I call it a concept—and is stretched to mean anything, thus rendering it meaningless.

The cast of characters are as one would imagine in say, *Abbot and Costello Meet the Mad Guru.* Mostly they are aimless American youths looking for drugs and sex and a meaning to it all. There are many in India who, for a price, are only too happy to supply all of the above—especially the last. No surprises there, and Miss Mehta does not tell us much beyond that. And that is too bad. She, on occasion, is almost ready to tell us more, but never quite gets to it. This is even more distressing because one gathers from the writing that she has had ten years to reflect—in London where she has wisely decided to live.

I would suggest therefore some of the

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themes that do lurk in this book. And I would begin with a story of my own. Recently, the local press reported a controversy wracking the University of Maryland—an otherwise calm behemoth institution of no great distinction. The controversy involved the management of a "nonprofit" co-op lunch counter where students could go rather than the local Pizza Hut or, worse, the official student union. Remembering institutional food as I do, almost any alternative is welcome—even a nonprofit co-op.

But soft. The quarrel was not between the university and its counterculture competitor. It was between two factions within the co-op struggling for the soul of their enterprise. The issue was chocolate milk. Should it be sold? One group said yes because the customers wanted it and the sales would help their struggling little business. Others said no. Chocolate milk had *additives* thus compromising the co-op's chief doctrine: namely, only natural foods sold here. The controversy went on for months. Perhaps it still has not been resolved.

The ignorant will only laugh at what they consider so much noise from solemn assemblies. The learned will recall that in *Gulliver's Travels,* the kingdom of Lilliput was torn asunder by a similar question of profound importance, namely, whether an egg should be cracked at the small or large end. The partisans of the small end at the time of Gulliver's visit held the advantage although the issue had cost 11,000 Lilliputian lives. It is true the co-op's deliberations are not the Council of Trent or even Vatican II, but they are theological in nature. Those who favor chocolate milk sales are clearly advocating a heterodox position within the larger faith that has touched us all. (Do not, dear reader, be skeptical on this point. After all, the U.S. Department of Agriculture is seriously considering the banning of bacon.)

Admittedly, the forces favoring chocolate milk are probably in the majority at Maryland and across the country. But the orthodox are more determined. You will recall that Athanasius at the Council of Nicaea could not match his rival Arius in prestige, debating skill or size of following. Nevertheless, the less genial Athanasius ended up writing the Nicene Creed, and rode Arius out of the church and out of history.

My purpose then is to invite serious consideration of a broader problem illuminated on occasion by Miss Mehta and the recent controversy in College Park. I speak of the culting of America. This is not to be confused with single-issue constituencies, much less the evil of factions so wisely discussed by James Madison in *The Federalist,* No. 10. No. The culting of America is the tendency of our people to take any small truth, half-truth or some bit of utter nonsense and turn it into an entire way of life. It becomes philosophy and theology and the further it is from common sense and ordinary society, the better. Remember the Latin word *cultus* means care or adoration. Its old meaning dealt with the care of the gods—that is, beings outside and above their worshipers. Today's cults, including Miss Mehta's menagerie of holy men, usually reject the notion that anyone or anything is superior to them. They are reduced to the care and adoration of themselves—their bodies in particular. It is no mere coincidence that our cults often anchor their "beliefs" in the ingesting of some "sacred" substance—material ranging from peyote to granola.

Is any of this really dangerous? Or are we merely dealing with an advanced case of Me-ism? After all, if people wish to behave in a (more or less) legal but foolish manner, why should the rest of us complain? Is it not a constitutional right to behave like a jackass?

The answer is both yes and no. Yes, people can act foolishly within the law though that line is often trespassed as the recent shoot-out between Philadelphia police and a pseudo-African cult attests. But having said that, the matter does not end there. Until the early 1960's, men and women of some taste and learning had no trouble in labeling the lunatic fringe as just that—lunatic. The now-forgotten likes of Gerald L. K. Smith and Gerald Winrod were regularly pilloried for their beliefs, which ranged from the merely goofy to the genuinely malicious. But words like crackpot (the American language is singularly rich in epithets describing the nutty) disappeared from our critical vocabularies, and soon the floodgates were opened. It is no accident that the level of public discourse sank while the nonsense index soared. The First Amendment became an expression of approval for any idea, no matter how insane, rather than a law which merely granted permission to express that idea. Meanwhile, the mass media, hungry for the novel, rejoiced in the prospect of endless examples of the bizarre.

But there is more to it than mere acceptance of balderdash even when we know better. All of these cults—their absorption in their own minutiae—bear some real social costs. Political cults do the most obvious harm. From the ban-the-bombers to the back-to-natureists, few if any have examined the consequences of their beliefs. Does Miss Fonda really want to wash her clothes by the banks of the Los Angeles river? I doubt it. But her splendidly irrational notion about energy and from whence it comes will in time reduce all of us to similar plights. For the lesser cults, they too mean trouble. For those who do nothing but follow their "little truths" to the end, their single-mindedness means that they have little or no time to practice civic virtue—which includes everything from defending one's country to curbing the dog. For the cultists, it is the rest of us who must make it somehow work.

In time, that simply is not going to happen, and that is not an amusing prospect. Unfortunately, the consequences of *Karma Cola* await the author's second book. □

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apparently matters little that Aristotle, Pericles and Socrates also were conceptually concerned with them.

The *New York Times* has attempted a feat of rare sophistication: it enlisted the services of a certain Mr. Michael Calabrese, a Ralph Nader associate, who set out to prove that Reagan was fleecing conservatives by selling himself as a conservative, which Calabrese believes his record as the governor of California disproves: the consumerist principle has thus been successfully applied to the protection of the conservative principle—of which the *Times* suddenly has revealed itself as the most solemn guardian.

Time magazine ran a story oozing with venom. "The ideas that the government causes most inflation, that a balanced budget is necessary and that the U.S. needs a major defense build-up have become staples of political oratory, proclaimed not only by conservative Republicans but by many Democrats." Even a mediocre mind, facing the evidence that someone had been right for a long time, and was recently proved so by his opponents' rush to accept his points, would extend its recognition—as a matter of grudging fairness, at least. Not *Time.* With a twisted liberal rabidity, *Time* asserts: "Reagan's ideas sound less than compelling," and goes on squirting journalistically cosmeticized virulence.

Nation, the organ of the Eastern establishment's oldest procommunist money, calls whatever Reagan says "Ferocious inanities." "Bring Back the Pols!" laments *The New Republic* in a lead editorial which bewails the people's right to choose and exhorts the return (well qualified by disclaimers: "We do not advocate a return . . .") to the more reliable smoke-filled-rooms procedures.

Also in *The New Republic,* TRB, that octogenarian tower of liberal rectitude, who if not always correct was always polite, heaps upon Reagan wild invectives in lieu of arguments: "He is the first Grade B movie star ever to seek . . . the American presidency." What's wrong with that? Isn't this a part of the 20th-century endemic American experience, quite culturally infectious, if one only remembers that the current Pope, too, tried his skills at acting? But trying "something new," which Reagan professes to do, is in TRB's eyes now a cardinal sin. He didn't think so when Roosevelt, Truman and Johnson tried "something new," he looked eagerly to "something new" from Adlai Stevenson, Hubert Humphrey and even Mr. Carter.

Nothing can match the hypocritical vituperation of the *Chicago Tribune,* an organ ready to rewrite the dictionary in order to decree who is conservative and who is not; mourning the demise of the Wisconsin cheese liberalism in its primary, the *Trib* wrote: ". . . even in Wisconsin, with its tradition of political savvy and skepticism, voters are willing—indeed, eager—to take him [Reagan] at face value." And on an ABC news program, a TV interviewer, fuming with barely contained hatred, came just short of accusing Reagan of lying. One wonders at the tremendous sense of mission a man must have to endure that kind of hostility and agree to interviews.

Mr. Michael Harrington, a solid authority on the subject, wrote not long ago: "In America . . . there is a Left based on hatred alone." We know it.

Scholarly Responsibility

Insight, a newsletter for the University of New Haven community, attempts to live up to its title by interviewing a certain Dr. Alfred Bradshaw, an associate professor of sociology there, and an "expert on death and dying." Here is what Prof. Bradshaw has to say about the Jonestown massacre:

> "I don't see anything that can be learned from it . . . In order to maintain a society rich in cultural diversity, we have to tolerate values different from our own . . . You know, the only way to eliminate Jonestowns is to force all people to think the same."

A few years ago a book appeared in the English language, on both sides of the Atlantic, entitled *Social Sciences as Sorcery.* It was written by an English professor of sociology, Dr. Stanislav Andreski of Reading University (and published in New York by St. Martin's Press), and it claimed that modern sociology was run and manipulated to a great extent by "scientists" whose sense of mental and moral responsibility scarcely exceeded that of a shaman. But apparently Dr. Bradshaw's reputation is untouched by Professor Andreski's argument. □

Journalism

Sideism

Mr. Cronkite, one of the modern American paradigms of integrity, whose purity of character projection (a new branch of ethics) children will soon learn about in school, specifies the role of his beloved medium in the current American ordeal:

> "TV was just a ploy in the Iranian hostage situation — used by both sides."

In other words: the hostages, and consequently, we Americans were a "side." The Iranian bandits were another. And TV was a third one—and the most abused, according to Mr. Cronkite's proud complaint. And it was apparently on its own side, not ours. □

Teen-age Pregnancy and the Media

Teen-age pregnancy and precocious motherhood are now considered "a crisis issue" even by feminists—the

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staunch defenders of sexual laxity as a civil right. In 1978 there were over a million pregnancies among 11-to-12-year-olds. Doctors and psychiatrists have now begun to discuss the generational genetic damage which may follow this phenomenon, impairing the health of the entire population; babies born to children are often afflicted by mental and physical pathologies and gravely impaired nervous systems.

Many arguments are heard explaining the problem. The so-called sexual revolution contributed mightily, though we were assured by its repugnant theoreticians — in the academe, the national magazines and *Playboy* manifestos— that it was designed by and for adults. No one mentioned that it might "liberate" children too; perhaps no one thought about such an eventuality. To our mind, the abomination of juvenile pregnancy can be traced to two main culprits: sex education and American journalism—its shortsightedness and moral obtuseness.

Sex education was supposed to improve the world by making adolescents better informed — information purported to better prepare them for the traps of life. The minigurus of sex education assumed that "telling it like it is" would dispel any difficulty. They prevailed, and sex education, sometimes pushed to the extremes of obsession with promiscuity, is now a fixture in the curriculum of the young. But a time-honored wisdom tells us that matters of sex should be shrouded in a certain amount of mystery and mystique in order to remain a propitious element of human life, both individual and social. And we know, too, that it enriches human life only when it is treated with reverence devoid of platitudes, obviousness, cheapness. Sex education does away with this wisdom and, by pulling down every curtain, devalues every value, makes the exceptional trite, a matter of hackneyed pseudoclinical slogans. It annihilates any system of restraint erected on the uniqueness of sexual phenomena. Sexuality becomes a shabby commonplace, and juvenile pregnancies follow.

However, even more sinister and disastrous is the role of the liberal press. The value-neutral reporting which the liberal media see as equivalent to uncompromising truth—and truth is seen by them as morally justifiable per se—is a powerful breeder of faddishness and lifestyles. Yet the liberal media go one step further: the social proliferation of attitudes rooted in sexual permissiveness is hailed as a victory of human rights, civil liberties, a more humane existence. The *New York Times Magazine* recently ran a story on early pregnancies in Brooklyn entitled "Children of Desire," in which objective reporting turned into an outright glamorization of conduct that is socially irresponsible and existentially moronical. "The erotic sight of Louis and Rose, touching and smiling . . ." intones the author, a *New York Times* columnist, with suspicious relish. "They combined in a twist of innocence and passion . . ." he writes about a 14-year-old mother and 13-year-old father. "Jeanette is beautiful . . ." he says about a 15-year-old mother who is a daughter of a welfare mother and who informs the *Times's* man quite soberly: "I want to get out *on my own* . . . The separate check will help. They give you enough . . ." [Emphasis added.] Jeanette tells the *Times's* man about her best friend, a 19-year-old welfare mother: "She's great! She's got five kids . . ." The reporter has nothing to say about parturition for public money—to him these girls, these people, their ethics, this sexual ambience are just "beautiful." For possible solutions, he quotes a "leading professional," the president of the Sex Information and Education Council, who says: "If we are going to talk about preventive measures, then we have to talk about preadolescence . . ."

The influence on mores of the *Times's* reporting may seem negligible, but movie reviewing, with its consequential impact on movie publicity in America, offers an example of special loathsomeness. The success of a movie is determined more and more by media build-up, and we would not hesitate to call the practices of American journalism in this respect just heinous. A particularly despicable movie about teenage promiscuity entitled, with a cutesy hint at irony, *Little Darlings* is advertised in one of the Gannett chain's middle-American dailies:

> "Don't let the title fool you . . ."

In the *Chicago Tribune:*

> "The bet is on: whoever catches a guy first wins . . ."

In *Rolling Stone:*

> "The bet is on: whoever loses her virginity first—wins . . ."

The movie has sociocultural ambitions; its authors deftly mix pushy Hollywood hustle with "liberating-the-consciousness" gibberish. They pretend to tell us "how it really is," as if we didn't know about life and its underside. That *Rolling Stone,* the *Pravda* of the Liberal Culture, dispenses prescriptions for how to live and succeed for $1.25 a copy, and would list defloration as victory, is no great discovery. However, the *Rolling Stone's* approach seems to us less dangerous in its simplism than the nihilistic trendiness of the smart hacks who make a fat buck as film "reviewers"—the *Chicago Tribune* insists on calling them "critics." Here are a few samples of such "criticism":

Time magazine:

> "The film has an amusing premise: the two heroines race to see who can lose her virginity first."

A Gannett "family" newspaper:

> "The film pits a poor little rich girl against a tough-talking tomboy in a race to see who will lose her virginity first . . . It's admittedly a gimmicky

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> premise for a film about growing up, but screenwriters Kimi Peck and Dalene Young and director Robert F. Maxwell [sic] carry it off with lots of humor, reasonable sensitivity and only minimal mawkishness . . . Rated R for subject and language; there's no on-screen action."

The *Chicago Tribune:*

> "This column has routinely supported the new permissiveness in movies . . ."

And the reviewer goes on to pan the movie because it is ". . . a big tease with nothing very fresh to say."

Really? Is there nothing else which could be said about "losers" and "winners" in a virginity "race"? Those in our society who eventually imitate the role models that *Little Darlings* promotes will, sooner or later, find that losing one's virginity on a bet can fill one's later life with ineffable humiliations. The reviewers who find *Little Darlings* "amusing" forfeit a critic's most hallowed task: the social power of warning. Thus, they contribute to human misery, even in the most indirect way. □

It's *Time* for Male Brothels

Even the phlegmatic, staid, Yankee New Hampshireites got excited when "the debut performance of two male strippers at a nightspot in New Hampshire's capital city drew an overflow crowd of 500 hooting, hollering women"—as the Associated Press reported from Concord.

To our recollection it all started with *Time,* which last year (August 6, 1979) gave nationwide exposure to some strongholds of this new variation of voyeurism in Wisconsin, Michigan, Kansas and Iowa — areas known till now as serene countryside. *Time* did it, of course, in the name of the people's right to know, and for its deep concern with the exactness of information. "The audiences seem a notably wholesome and ordinary cross section of women," *Time* noticed solemnly, in order to reassert its social usefulness and rectitude. And it quoted one of the promoters of the show who expressed the view that "women get turned on more than men do. They reach out and grab . . . " and they do it " . . . as a kind of flout to their husbands and boyfriends . . . "

What benefit does *Time* expect to gain from making it such a salient point that some women have the same proclivity, or urge, to ogle as some men have? During several centuries a myth was erected that they don't. Civilizations and cultures have thrived on this little hypocrisy, so why is *Time* bent on destroying it? *Time* pontificates against decadence, and its editors would swear they have nothing to do with spreading it. But what is decadence? Among other things, it's a mindless indifference to what may have always existed but what was considered unacceptable by socially established standards. *Time,* that righteous champion of information-without-evaluation, is today America's chief dispenser of such mindlessness. Don't its publishers care how many marriages might be sundered or how many lives twisted because of its "information"? □

Books in the Mail

The I.R.S. vs. the Middle Class by Martin A. Larson; The Devin-Adair Company; Old Greenwich Connecticut. Tips for dealing with I.R.S. audits and advice on preparing tax returns.

Inflation and Unemployment edited by G. Carl Wiegand; The Devin-Adair Company; Old Greenwich, Connecticut. An analysis by 12 top economists of unemployment, the federal government's effort to control it and the impact of labor-union monopolies.

Restricting Handguns: The Liberal Skeptics Speak Out edited by Don B. Kates, Jr.; North River Press; Ottawa, Illinois. A carefully researched collection of essays which document the case against gun control.

Margaret Sanger: Father of Modern Society by Elasah Drogin; CUL Publications; Coarsegold, California. A look at the founder of Planned Parenthood and her personal efforts to reduce the numbers of the poor and "feeble-minded" through mass sterilization and birth control.

On the Present Position of Catholics in America by James Hitchcock; The National Committee of Catholic Laymen; New York. A survey of anti-Catholic bigotry on the current political scene.

Holocaust: New and Old an interview with Elasah Drogin; Remnant of Israel; Coarsegold, California. The relationships between Judaism and Christianity and how these relations are affected by genocide and abortion.

It's Your Choice by Warren Hackett; America's Future; New Rochelle, New York. The history and development of the free-enterprise system and the difficulties caused by government intervention.

Marihuana—Deceptive Weed by Gabriel G. Nahas, M.D., Ph.D.; Raven Press; New York. A scientific examination of the physical, psychological and societal effects of marihuana.

Joy Without a Cause by Christopher Derrick; Sherwood Sugden & Company; La Salle, Illinois. Essays by the author of *Escape from Scepticism.*

Citizen of Rome: Reflections from the Life of a Roman Catholic by Frederick D. Wilhelmsen; Sherwood Sugden & Company; La Salle, Illinois. A collection of personal, political and religious essays.

The Evolution of Civilizations by Carroll Quigley; Liberty Fund; Indianapolis. A comprehensive and perceptive look at the factors behind the rise and fall of civilizations.

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Liberal Culture

So Be It!

How gratifying it is to quote the *New York Times Book Review* without rancor and with appreciation. And we have a vague feeling that a suspicion we have cautiously voiced in these pages for so long has finally found its way even into the minds and editorial offices on West 43rd Street:

> "One of the saddest things about psychology today is that so many of its better minds are forced to cope with the cant, error and falsehood generated by the discipline itself. In the introduction to this excellent book, Robert May tells us that one of his themes will be 'that there *are* significant psychological differences between the sexes, and that these differences are worth thinking about.' He goes on to note, somewhat ruefully, that though this would seem to be a mild enough point, even to raise the question these days is to be thought 'at best mean-spirited and at worst a reactionary bigot.'"

Where Do They Stand?

The *Village Voice,* the Manhattan-based organ of massage-parlor ethics, lately unveiled its agricultural program in an article entitled "Free the Farmer":

> "Farmers should become employees of the government, federal and local. This is not advocacy of the collective farms of the Ukraine, but acknowledgement of the fact that farmers serve an essential public need, are (and have been) oppressed in the performance of that function by the private interests which in fact control their destiny."

The *Voice* also expresses its concern for the disposal of our perennial surplus of grain. No need to worry, once the *Voice's* experts on social paradise attain power and put the brilliant theories above into operation.

'What Is This Thing Called Love?'

It took "six years of research"—according to the *Chicago Tribune,* which reported it with admiration—for Ms. Dorothy Tennov, a behavioral psychologist with the University of Bridgeport in Connecticut, to find out what makes a male or female of mating age "tremble," "feel hot," "feel weak," "look pale," have an unreliable stomach and experience "heart palpitation." She discovered that it is "limerence" (a word of her own coinage, a substitute for infatuation), a phenomenon worthy of protracted study, scientific treatises, academic fellowships, government grants and the writing of books. She doesn't think those six years were wasted. After all, she has come up with some momentous revelations: "When it occurs, it occurs in the same way to both men and women."

Poor Cole Porter, Billie Holiday and Lena Horne. To sing about such a complex and impenetrable psychosociobehavioral problem they had only two words—"thing" and "love"—at their disposal.

Instant Martyrdom

A certain Professor Thomas Sheehan, in the pages of the *New York Review of Books,* describes the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith under Pope John Paul II as follows:

> "This is the group whose predecessors had Giordano Bruno burned at the stake . . . and . . . later managed to convince Galileo that prudence and a longer life lay on the side of a geocentric model of the universe.
>
> Although papally mandated executions have been outlawed in Italy since 1870, it seems that the spirit of the Inquisition is a gift that goes on giving."

The sinister misgivings of Prof. Sheehan are prompted by the Vatican's discipline of two Catholic theologians accused of teaching doctrine contrary to that of the Roman Catholic Church. They question the divinity of Christ, central to every Christian religion on earth. These theologians were not burned at the stake, defrocked or even excommunicated; and only one was stripped of his privilege of teaching theology. We somehow do not see either of them on their way to martyrdom.

Classicism & Snobbishness

Whatever respect and esteem we might have had for Prof. Dr. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.—an adviser to presidents and presidential hopefuls, Manhattan's shining beacon of charm and scholarship — they suffered a severe setback when we read of his feelings about *Winnie-the-Pooh.* He dislikes the story, its author and Pooh himself. Mr. Schlesinger quotes C.S. Lewis: "No book is really worth reading at the age of 10 which is not equally (and often far more) worth reading at the age of 50 . . . " and concludes: "I found it [*Winnie-the-Pooh*] even more unendurable today in its archness and snobbishness."

Well, what can one say? Neither Mr. Milne nor Pooh are exactly personae inclined to come up with a strong word in defense of their good names. But with Eeyore — that's another story. As it has stood for so long in print, for the edification of both young and old:

> "Eeyore, the old grey donkey, stood by the side of the stream, and looked at himself in the water.
>
> 'Pathetic,' he said. 'That's what it is. Pathetic.'"

That's what he said.

Business as Unusual

What does one read these days in the "Business Day" section of the most venerable of newspapers? Condé Nast, the giant publisher of *Vogue, Mademoiselle, Glamour, House & Garden,* etc., which claims a total readership of 26 million, advertises in the *New York Times* its recipe for life to be promoted in the 80's:

> "I want a girl just like the girl who divorced dear old dad."

The pun is good, the prescription lousy—at least to our mind. If Condé Nast believes it to be a money-making opportunity, then its social conscience stinks. After all, some of those 26 million mushy minds that see in *Vogue* a glamorous existence may take that advertising technique as good advice.

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The Art of Ad

In the classified section of *Women's Wear Daily,* we could find the following ad:

"SEX!
Now that we have your attention, we'd like to tell you about our fabulous collection of off-priced dresses, suits, tops, jeans, etc. . ."

Imagine, there are still people around who do not believe Dr. Pavlov, and who dismiss his acquaintance with dogs as unscientific. □

Editor's Comment *continued from page 5*

done everything possible to assist Russia and its "promise," found themselves in the upper brackets of financial affluence. The most dedicated Stalinists of the 30's and 40's became advertising symbols for the mink-coat industry, and those who dreamed about being a commissar in America wound up with Rolls Royces as prizes for their ideological devotion. Certainly, many of them would swear by their patriotism: they were communists because they desired to see their country better—and that's what patriotism is all about. Their rewards in the form of lavish luxuries do not jar their sense of logic; it is hard to dispute subjectivity in terms of coherence, but it's possible to do it in terms of human dignity. This phenomenon, however, played a role in the vicissitudes of the very notion of American patriotism.

4.

In the 60's, the centuries-old foundation for naive but honest social beliefs and feelings was destroyed. These sentiments were replaced by other beliefs and feelings which were declared to be even more honest and more socially valuable. The result proved to be the disintegration of social cells like the family, of social fabric like principles of conduct, convention, tradition. The atrophy of that special social will that determines the destinies of nations followed. The collapse of old-fashioned patriotism was ascribed to the failure of what anti-American Americans called the American "promise." They blamed the entire society for racism, imperialism, poverty, cultural vulgarity and what that most shameless of freeloaders, Professor Marcuse, called "repressive tolerance." The conclusion was that America was not worthy of being the focal point of emotions hitherto called patriotic.

This created a sort of national schizophrenia of awesome dimension. The general awareness was heavily burdened with American sins, errors, faults, deficiencies and crimes; the villainy of America became a commonplace. But not one of the rabid accusers and persecutors had anything to say about what we should do with America's accomplishments, assets, merits. Yet, they did exist, even to the most prejudiced eye. And even if the American America-haters buried the American promise, the rest of the world still sees it as fresh as ever. If it were not so, why do the most wretched of this earth collectively dream about America, not about socialism —as is illustrated by the continuing saga of illegal immigration? Everywhere in the world, poor people seem to believe that America is the best answer to their needs. Why is it that, with all our flaws, we are the most powerful presence in human awareness around the world? Some call this presence cultural imperialism, yet—take note—America does not command mankind's ideas but its *preferences.* No one forces people to wear blue jeans in Nigeria or the Philippines, or to listen to Ella Fitzgerald in Paris, or to read Hemingway in Oslo—as Russia forces little children in Poland and Mongolia to read Leninist catechism. Even those who hate our politics, or accuse us of bottomless wickedness, are helpless in front of an old Walt Disney movie.

We must be doing something right for someone. This is why American patriotism makes sense.*

—Leopold Tyrmand

*This is a portion of a chapter entitled "On Patriotism" from *The Prudent Progressive or an Arcadia of New Wisdom.*

Insanity in America

"The relation between psychiatrists and other kinds of lunatics is more or less the relation of a convex folly to a concave one—"

—Karl Kraus

We are not the first to be plagued by a suspicion that psychology as a profession, and psychotherapists as its mighty bureaucracy, are often breeders of madness in America. We try to combat this obsessive impression, suppress it by force of reason. Then we read the following in *Time,* a very, very propsychobabble organ:

> "Joseph P., a technical writer in Manhattan, dropped out of psychotherapy last year to save the $45 weekly fee. Even with that extra spending money, Joseph went into debt, and his psychological condition worsened. Now he is back with the same psychotherapist, going twice at $60 per session, and almost $1,200 behind in his payments. Says he: 'I thought therapy was a middle-class frill I could give up to meet inflation. But the economy is so bad I can't get through the week without therapy . . . '"

and we know now that everything's lost. Even the tribulations of Kafka's Joseph K. seem to us more comprehensible than those of Joseph P. □

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